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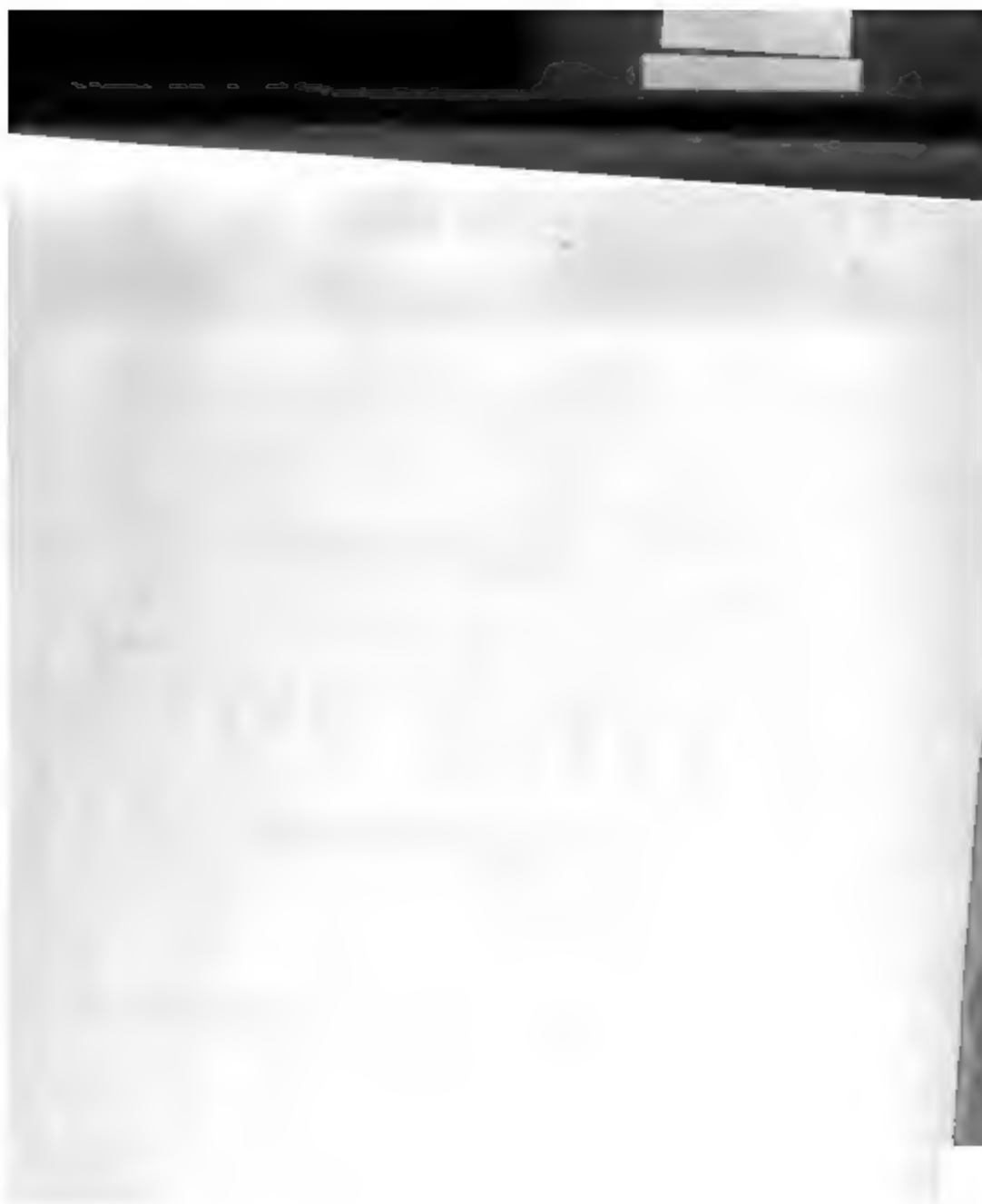
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COLLECTION
OF
BRITISH AUTHORS.
VOL. CCCCXXI.

HECKINGTON BY MRS. GORE.

IN TWO VOLUMES.

, VOL. I

Bewailing, in my chambere, all allone,
Despairing of all joye or remedye,
Foretired of my thocht, and woe-begone!
Unto the windowe gin I walk in bye;
To see the world and folk that wend forbye;
As, for the tyme, though I of mirthis fude
May have no moe, to luke it dothe me gude.
KING JAMES I. (1325.)

HECKINGTON.

A NOVEL.

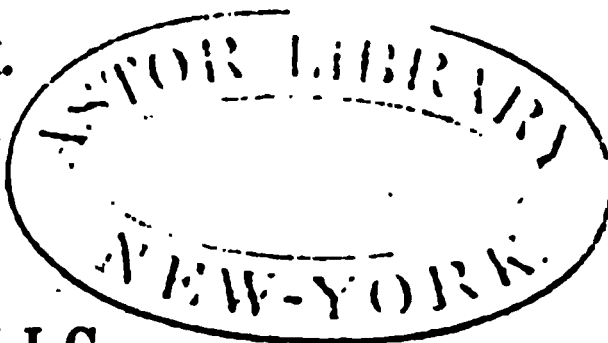
BY

Author of "The Story of the Life of George Washington"
MRS. GORE.

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IN TWO VOLUMES.

VOL. I.



LEIPZIG

BERNHARD TAUCHNITZ

1858.

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HECKINGTON.

VOL. I.

CHAPTER I

"TINY does not seem to have returned in better spirits from the wedding at Clevelands. — I was in hopes, my dear, that seeing something of the world, particularly in so gay a scene, would brighten her up," said Mr. Corbet to his invalid wife, as they sat together over the cindery fire of a dark parlour, on a cheerless winter day.

"Her spirits are never high. But she enjoyed herself excessively; and a civil line which she brought back to me from Mrs. Horsford, mentioned that in her bridesmaid's dress she really looked lovely."

"Which, if one didn't know that Mrs. Horsford's civil lines are mere flummery, would be a pleasant hearing. But I wish she had brought back, instead, a cheerful face; or was sitting chatting with us here, instead of moping in her own room."

"She is only *gone to write* a letter to her Aunt Eunore, my dear. Probably, to give her an account of

Heckington. I.

the wedding. Tiny has seldom much to write about, - poor thing! —"

"Nearly as much as Mrs. Enmore has to answer I suspect."

"But Tiny will have something to cheer her next year," added Mrs. Corbet, in whose monotonous life a year was as a day. "Edgar will then be old enough for lessons."

Mr. Corbet could not but hint that a spelling-book and a dull child, were not exactly the objects calculated to enliven a pretty young girl of seventeen. — But his gentle-hearted wife was not to be convinced.

"Tiny was so fond of the children! — She had never been the same girl since Alfred was taken from her hands to go to school! —"

There was some excuse for her prejudice in favour of the boys and their spelling-books. — They were her own, and the pretty young girl of seventeen only his step-daughter.

A tenderer stepmother, however, never existed; and till six years old, Tiny not only remained ignorant that her own mother had died in child-bed; but, though two little brothers were already born from her father's second marriage, was still the spoiled child of the family. Nay, of her two parents, Mrs. Corbet was decidedly the fondest; and, but that the expected arrival of a third olive branch, rendering it desirable that Grenfield House should be kept quiet for a time, determined her father

to accept for her an often-declined invitation to visit her maternal grandmother, in London, she would never have surmised that her "dear, dear mamma" was only a mamma by courtesy.

Not all the groundless complaints, however, which she heard uttered to the old lady by the nursemaid who had attended her from her birth, and who accompanied her to town, could persuade her to fancy herself aggrieved by the number of nurselings who crowded her nursery, and caused "poor little Miss Sophy to be so terribly put upon." Even her grandmother, who had somewhat resented her son-in-law's precipitate re-marriage (on the usual plea of wanting some one to take care of his motherless infant), was forced to admit that the care had been admirably taken.

Still, as Mrs. Corbet's young progeny was annually increasing, and her health becoming daily more infirm, it was clear that as the dimensions and income of Grenfield House did not increase with the family, the comfort of poor little Tiny was in danger; and at the end of a two months' visit, the child had so endeared herself to Mrs. Rawdon, that she finally obtained the sanction of the Corbets to retain her as an inmate.

Still, it was the stepmother who most regretted, and longest resisted, the concession. It was only on learning from her husband that Tiny was wholly unprovided for, and that Mrs. Rawdon, if she took a fancy to her grandchild, would most likely secure her an independence,

that she withdrew her opposition. Considering all was doing to encroach upon the little girl's prospects must not stand in her light.

The heart of the infirm young crowder of the Grenfield House nursery was so much better than her own that she was not likely to surmise how far greater might be the advantage to her stepchild of being reared like little Tiny, by her father's homely fireside, than as Miss Corbet of her grandmother's formal mansion in Harley Street. Her frocks might have displayed elaborate embroidery; but, instead of being prematurely governed into headaches, the child would have been tearing about the Grenfield garden, with her little brothers; escaped many a languid, dreary hour, yearning for the caresses which, in early childhood, had soothed her little heart.

For grandmamma was as cold as a stone. She claimed the care of "poor Sophia's little girl" far more as a duty than a pleasure. Her pride, which revolted against her daughter's derogatory marriage with a yeoman's son, revolted equally against a grandchild of her's being "put upon" in Mr. Corbet's shabby household. But she chose to bring her up in the same disagreeable manner she had brought up "poor Sophia and her sister Jane;" both of whom her crotchety husband, the late Mr. Rawdon, detested, because they were *girls*; and whom she had not the grace to compensate *by extra affection* for their father's unnatural estrangement.

ment. She seemed, indeed, almost as much out of sorts with their sex as the arrogant parent, who, because designated in his County History as "Rawdon of Heckington," resented as an injury at the hands of Providence that to "Heckington" there was no Arthur Rawdon to succeed.

All the disappointed man could do with two such unprofitable articles on his hands as a Sophia and a Jane, was to marry them early, in hopes that, at the time of his decease, an heir-male might not be wanting; and his mortification was proportionably great, when his elder girl chose to attach herself to the son of a neighbouring gentleman farmer, of small means; who, as the united ages of father and son did not amount to his own, had no means of maintaining a Miss Rawdon of Heckington in a style appropriate to her birth, even had her parents stooped to sanction so humiliating an alliance.

The marriage, therefore, was deferred, and the squire forced to content himself with matching his younger girl with a handsome and wealthy Creole, of the name of Enmore; who, within three years, rendered him the proud grandfather of two promising boys.

From that period, poor Sophia was allowed to fret away her days unmolested. Nor was it till six years after her first betrothal to Henry Corbet, that the sudden death of his father, and his accession to a small estate, enabled him to transfer his bride from the stately old mansion of Heckington to the Grenfield House, which, *small and dull as it was, she regarded as a paradise on earth.*

But she reached her paradise too late. Her girl was gone. Her health was gone. And though, on receiving that she gave promise of increasing his posterity, "Rawdon of Heckington" executed a new will, bequeathing to her and her heirs-male the whole of his property on condition that they successively assumed his name and arms, the bequest was invalidated by a stipulation that, at her death, in the event of her leaving daughters only, the estate was to pass to the sons of her sisters attended with similar conditions.

She did not leave "daughters." She left but one, and it was even surmised that vexation on learning the sex of the unwelcome infant, had hastened her end. Already, the Corbets were in possession of Heckington Hall. The pompous old gentleman had died within a few months of signing his will; — frightened out of life, as many others have been, by an operation denying his mortality; and, in compliance with his desire that the coming heir should be born under the roof of his forefathers, poor Sophia had undergone a hasty removal to her new home, the fatigue of which unluckily accelerated the advent of a still-born son.

All satisfaction in the possession of Heckington was consequently destroyed for a time. Nay, for a long time. Two years elapsed, and no signs of a successor to the little martyr! Old Mrs. Rawdon had taken up, with dowagerly dignity, her abode in Harley Street. Mr. Corbet had advertised Grenfield House to be let; and was

voting himself to the improvement of the fine estate to which he had succeeded. But, already, the neighbours began to surmise that he was labouring for the benefit of others; — that Mrs. Enmore and her handsome sons would succeed to Heckington Hall.

It is surprising, by the way, how much the joint-stock gossip of country neighbourhoods is enlivened by contingencies arising from the eccentricity of English wills. Scarcely a county whose dinner-parties cannot turn out their bagged fox, of some heir dispossessed, or entail created, by the caprices of a wilful, self-sufficient, or half-cracked testator.

But the dinner parties of Hertfordshire did more than discuss the event. They were sincerely grieved, when, four years after the tardy marriage of the Corbets, they dispossessed themselves of the Rawdon estates, by the birth of a daughter; — Mr. Corbet to return to Grenfield House, for which he had luckily found no tenant — “poor Sophia” to take up her abode in her last home! —

So resentful, indeed, were the neighbours of old Mr. Rawdon’s testamentary dispositions — for the Corbets had been gentle in their rule at Heckington, and kindly in their hospitality, — that when, little more than a twelvemonth after the decease of his wife, the widower secured a successor for poor Sophia in the youthful daughter of the curate of the parish, they not only found no fault with *his selection*, but affected to believe *that it was solely for the sake of little Tiny he had*

provided her with a stepmother scarcely out of her teens.

It was only the venerable Mrs. Rawdon who resented his precipitancy. Though she and her obdurate husband had chosen to render miserable so many years of their daughter Sophia's life, she had become "poor Sophia," now that she was in a better world; and as Henry Corbet had waited half-a-dozen years for her hand, it was clear that another half-dozen should have elapsed before he sued for the hand of another. The dowager was consequently intitled to turn her back upon the plebeian family at Grenfield House; which she could do with perfect ease, at the distance of forty miles. Heckington was deserted, and her daughter Enmore settled in Jamaica; where the valuable plantations of her husband were far more important to his interests than the English property in which his wife had only a life interest, as *locum tenens* for her elder son.

When little Tiny became her grandmother's guest in Harley Street, however, this elder son was at Eton, and his brother Willy at the Charter House: and though occasional visitors to old Mrs. Rawdon, they found her house so much less jolly than those of their father's agent, Mr. Harman, at Wimbledon and in Bedford Square, — that their visits began late in the holidays, and ended early: — the manners and customs of dowagers and public schoolboys being rarely found to dovetail.

CHAPTER II.

TINY was just fourteen, and the heavy part of her education was over, when her grandmother died; — if life her semi-existence, without love, without cheerfulness, without intellectual pursuits, could properly be called. Mrs. Rawdon never opened a book, — never opened a heart, — was neither pious, nor resigned, nor thankful; so that when an emblazoned achievement brightened the dull front of her dingy mansion in Harley Street, no one shed a tear but Miss Corbet's governess, who received her dismissal from the executors. — The servants, to whom, according to old custom in old families, a year's wages had been bequeathed, went on their way rejoicing.

The heart of her granddaughter, though awed and saddened by the first aspect of death, was speedily relieved by her return to Grenfield House; which, in spite of the frequent protests of Harley Street, she had always persisted in calling "home." Though a transition from the domestic comfort afforded by two thousand a year, to the privations necessitated by four hundred and a family of children, might to many girls have appeared irksome, Miss Corbet (*whose* pet name of Tiny had only *been bestowed because*, immediately after her mother's

death, that of Sophia gave pain to the hearers,) was too happy to be loved and caressed, with little romping brothers climbing her knees, to discover the toughness of the mutton, or the coarseness of the damask on which it was served.

It was summer-time; and for years, she had enjoyed the sunshine of Heaven only amidst the sooty bushes of Cavendish Square, or the platitudes of the Regent's Park; — and to have the run of a garden and paddock, without a green veil, and be called “darling” on her return, was almost sufficient happiness for Tiny.

But the cold, loveless habits in which she had been reared, had not only created a craving in her young heart for the tenderness of domestic life, but rendered her prematurely thoughtful. After a week's prodigality of rural pleasures, she saw that, in a household so contracted as that of Grenfield House, it behoved her to be useful. She became the teacher of her little brothers, and a vigilant attendant on the sick couch of poor Mrs. Corbet. The second boy, Clement, died a few months afterwards, the victim of an accident; and the grief occasioned in the affectionate little circle by the sad event, for a time absorbed its faculties. Alfred, however, remained the charge of his stepsister; and when, three years afterwards, he was placed at a neighbouring grammar-school where he did ample credit to his tutor, Tiny discovered that, in forwarding *his* education, she had *considerably* advanced her own.

Such was the state of things at Grenfield at the moment of the wedding at Cleveland. Alfred was at school, Edgar still in the nursery, Mrs. Corbet a permanent fixture on the parlour sofa. Aunt Jane, now a widow, was residing in Hertford Street, May Fair; her son Arthur, already "Rawdon of Heckington," at College, and her younger, William, completing his education at Dresden. The fortune of five thousand pounds bequeathed to Miss Corbet by her grandmother, was not to come into her possession till she attained her majority; or the shabby old furniture of the Grenfield parlour would have been renovated, and a stout cob have replaced the shambling shooting pony of her father. But an allowance of a hundred a year was assigned her, meanwhile, by Mrs. Rawdon's executor; a clever, gentlemanly solicitor, who would have doubled the amount, but that he discerned in his first short interview with his ward, that not a penny of it would be appropriated to her own use. Nor did he think it desirable that, her father being able to maintain her, she should contribute, as she desired, the remainder of her income towards the household expenses. If she should make a poor marriage, the accumulations of her minority might be important to her.

Between Grenfield House and the neighbourhood, meanwhile, there was no excess of sympathy. The Corbets had *neither health nor fortune* to be hospitable; *and though, had their hundreds per annum been thou-*

sands, people would have felt considerable interest in the better or worse of the feeble invalid, or had they been tens of thousands would have despatched messengers on horseback to enquire after her sick headache, Mrs. Corbet's habitual sofa, and invalid's cap and shawl, had come to be considered a bore. Once a year, was as much as anybody cared to be glad or sorry for her in a morning visit; and as Tiny was always in the schoolroom, the neighbouring squires persisted in asking after her, of her father, as his "little girl." She had never yet appeared in other than girlish attire. She had never answered their salutations without blushing and stammering. And as Grenfield House gave no dinners, and had no manor to shoot over, they were justified in regarding her as an insignificant little thing, unworthy consideration.

It was, therefore, a vast condescension on the part of the Horsfords of Cleveland, to invite her to become one of the bridesmaids of their daughter Amy, on her marriage with Sir James Armstead. So at least thought Tiny; and though her father was of opinion that his dear "little girl" was worthy to be Maid of Honour to Majesty itself, even Mrs. Corbet trembled at the idea of her stepdaughter, arrayed in silk attire, and bewildered by the tumult of a fashionable wedding. The gay and fashionable Horsfords, however, were not to be denied; *and, as they did not think it necessary to state that Miss Corbet was invited only as a substitute, at the last*

moment, for a capricious niece, the fact that a beautiful bridesmaidenly costume was forwarded from Cleveland to Grenfield House, was considered a token of more than neighbourly good will.

Henry Corbet, though he had progressed into grey hairs and the rheumatism, was moved almost to tears when he saw his little girl suddenly transformed, by lace and white satin, into a young woman if not beautiful, at least strikingly pleasing; and it sorely vexed Mrs. Corbet that her boy Alfred could not see how pretty his teacher-sister looked, when relieved from her brown holland pinafore!

But the happiest and proudest of the party was Tiny. With all the sanguine elation of girlhood she stepped into the carriage despatched for her from Cleveland. In the auspicious wedding of Sir James Armstead and Amy Horsford, the pleasantness of her life was beginning. She was going into new scenes, among new people kindly disposed towards her; in a new dress, in which she was said to look charming. What could girl wish for more?

Had Grenfield House been a subscriber to Hookham's, or Mudie's "Select Libraries," the well-read novice would have been aware that, under such circumstances, she was intitled in this, the first chapter of her adventures, to make a conquest of some importance. An Honourable Frederick, or at the least, a baronet's son, ought to fall to her share. But, ignorant of her privileges as a

heroine, she thought herself lucky to be taken in to the wedding-breakfast by the tutor of the Master Horsfords; and at the merry ball which closed the ceremonies of the day, exulted at being invited to dance by a succession of lanky-haired striplings.

So far from finding the dark eyes of a mustachioed stranger fixed upon her in startled admiration, the only person whom she detected gazing upon her was old Dr. Ashe; who, having vaccinated poor Tiny in her babyhood, took a strong interest in the state of her complexion.

It was not, however, disappointed ambition which, while Mr. and Mrs. Corbet were discussing her the following day in the parlour, caused the head of Tiny to rest heavily upon her hand, instead of rushing at once, for the benefit of her aunt Enmore, into the details of the Clevelands' wedding. She had not heart to write about wedding favours and wedding cake. — She was thoroughly out of spirits.

At the gay scene of the preceding day, amid the clash of the brass-band and the illuminations of the evening ball, when healths were drunk with cheers at the breakfast, and the bride at parting wept on the neck of her mother, a sense of loneliness had weighed her down. Troops of friends had rushed forward to shake hands with the lovely Amy, as, on the arm of her bridegroom, she proceeded to their travelling carriage. *Hundreds of genial voices* responded when the health of

the new Lady Armstead was proposed. For she was the centre of attraction to a little world of her own.

But for herself, the poor little bridesmaid, what mortal cared? Had *her* marriage been in process of solemnization that winter's morning, who would have officiated as her bridesmaid, — who would have huzzaed in her honour, — who would have dried her farewell tears? — Mrs. Corbet, daily more infirm, thought only of her pains and aches. Her father, embarrassed in his circumstances, cared chiefly for the amount of his weekly bills. Alfred was engrossed by football and Latin grammar. Little Edgar preferred his old nurse to the sister who was to teach him to spell. In the old Slough of Despond in Harley Street, she had been forbidden to form childish friendships. Her spirited young Enmore cousins had systematically made her a butt. The Horsfords were worldly girls, who despised her as a country cousin. She was conscious of no human sympathy. She was alone — *alone* in the world! —

But was this always to be? Was she to remain thus sequestered from the friendships and acquaintanceships of life? Was she to be a perpetual nonentity; unable to take part in, or even to comprehend, such conversation as she had overheard at Cleveland; — neither very learned, nor very wise, but as strange to her as if it had been uttered in Arabic.

She could bear it *now*, perhaps: because, as Mrs. Corbet often reminded her, next year little Edgar would

be in want of lessons, and occupy all her time. But when Edgar, in his turn, went off like Alfred to the Aldenham grammar school and trapball, what was to become of her from morning till night at Grenfield, between her silent father and his moaning wife?

Aspiring at once to intellectual intercourse and the giddier pleasures of life, poor Tiny little knew the advantages she enjoyed in that dull, peaceful household; where not a syllable prejudicial to a fellow-creature had ever reached her ear, or an unkind word reproached her own shortcomings. What fruit of the tree of knowledge, however high-flavoured, would yield her half such refreshment as this blessed impunity! —

Experience had not yet taught her that there was more of human kindness in the simplest phrase of her ailing stepmother, than in all the studied compliments and set smiles of the affable lady of Clevelands; whose chief occupation in life was that of throwing powdered sugar, by way of dust, into the eyes of her associates. Mrs. Horsford's cajolements had not only taken the poor girl's reason prisoner; but, aided by compassionate condolences, convinced her that her isolated existence was the subject of commiseration to the whole neighbourhood of Grenfield.

All this, it was, that caused poor Tiny to deliberate over the sheet of paper extended on her blotting-book, ere she addressed her aunt Enmore. She was at no loss to describe the beauty of Lady Armstead's Brussels veil,

or the mythological devices that adorned her wedding-cake. But she scarcely knew how to express, without offence to her parents or humiliation to herself, that the invitation so often reiterated by her aunt to spend a few weeks or even months, with her in town, would, if again repeated, be particularly acceptable.

At length, however, it was written. The letter was despatched, and answered, and Tiny's proposal of her company warmly accepted, before she had recovered her amazement at having risked so strong a measure.

In another week, she was settled under the roof of Mrs. Enmore; her father, much on the same grounds which had originally determined him to part with her in favour of her grandmother, having not only consented to the arrangement, but escorted her to town.

"You must not fret at leaving home, my dear girl," said he; "for, now you have lost Alfred, it is no longer the same place to you. But keep up your spirits, Tiny. During your absence, I shall be getting on with Edgar; and I hope to push him into two syllables, for you, by the time you return to Grenfield House."

CHAPTER III.

It was, perhaps, because Mrs. Enmore was conscious that her own offspring had superseded her niece in the inheritance seemingly apportioned to her by nature, that she so readily accepted her offered company; for she was neither a hospitable, nor an open-hearted woman. Her secretive nature rendered her averse to intimate companionship of any kind. The Rawdons of Heckington had been systematically reserved with their children. Her late husband was so unmitigated a tyrant, that during her married life, she had been as much a slave as any nigger on the Fredville plantation; and though now completely her own mistress, the habits of mysteriousness — not to say deception — she had acquired during this long subjection, retained their mastery over her nature.

Hating to be questioned, whether about trifles or things important, she carefully refrained from questioning. But the self-control, which restricted to her eyes the curiosity usually expressed by the voice, imparted a restless, prying look to a face otherwise handsome.

To her niece, who for the last three years had been living at Grenfield between two of the most open-hearted of human beings, nothing appeared more extraordinary

than the "*Pray* don't mention it again," or, "*Pray* be on your guard," which prefaced even the slightest of Mrs. Enmore's observations. She spoke in an habitual whisper, from fear of listeners at the door; and would scarcely express an opinion that the day was cold, till the servant who was putting on coals had quitted the room.

After a few day's residence, it struck poor Tiny that Mrs. Enmore's house and habits were far less cheerful than formerly, — a change she ascribed to the absence of her noisy cousins; forgetting that a visit to aunt Enmore had afforded a pleasant escape from Harley Street and her school-room tasks; whereas she had now to compare it with a home where the name of Tiny was a household word and she scarcely knew herself as Miss Corbet.

Still, though the prim aunt, who, with the aid of hair and teeth thirty years younger than her own, preserved a false appearance of juvenility, damped all attempts at conversation, she enjoyed in Hertford Street the pleasant companionship of the large and well-chosen library of the late Mr. Enmore.

A volume or two on farriery or farming, Graham's Domestic Medicine, and the boys' school-books and Robinson Crusoe, had comprised the literary treasures of Grenfield House; and the few books she had brought from Harley Street, chiefly gaudily bound prize-books, presented to her by her grandmother or governess, had

been read and re-read till both the gilding and charm were worn away. But now, she plunged unchecked into a sea of enjoyment; and aunt Enmore was never better pleased than when she found her book in hand. "Books were safe companions;" that is, with certain restrictions.

"Her niece," she hinted, "should be very cautious in talking about the works she read. Promiscuous reading was generally disapproved, and young ladies who incurred the charge of being *blue* were regarded with suspicion."

It was easy to observe the injunction; for with the exception of a flighty spinster, a cousin of both, Mrs. Enmore's intimates consisted of a few creole families, — uninteresting, unintellectual people, whose conversation, like her own, was restricted to the discussion of the weather, and whose boudoirs, like her own, were ornamented with madrepores, shells, and corals; while the visits occasionally inflicted by the loquacious Lucretia Rawdon, were occupied by a series of guerilla skirmishes on the part of the nimble-tongued guest, and of agonised "hush, hushes!" on that of her kinswoman.

"Why, Tiny has grown quite a beauty!" cried Lucretia, the first time she installed herself by the fireside in Hertford Street, after Miss Corbet's arrival. "A thousand pities her grandmother did not do something handsomer for her! Two hundred a-year won't go far to marry a girl in these prodigal times. To be sure, poor

Mrs. Rawdon had only her jointure; and her servants who kept her in leading-strings, Jane, as yours do *you*, took care she shouldn't lay by much for the benefit of her family. They would hardly allow me a sight of the old lady during the last few years of her life, lest I should be on the look-out for a legacy. And I can't say, cousin Jane, that even your surly Mr. Harding is much civiller. This very morning, he looked as if he would have liked to shut the door in my face."

"Hush, hush!" murmured Mrs. Enmore, — glancing anxiously at the inner drawing-room, where Harding might possibly be employed in watering the hyacinths; and where her niece was busy with her books.

"But as I was saying about Tiny Corbet," resumed Miss Rawdon, changing her topic without lowering her shrill double-edged voice, "I suppose, by your establishing such a pretty girl under your roof, you intend her to become Mrs. Rawdon of Heckington?"

"Hush, hush! You don't know what you are talking about!" again murmured poor Mrs. Enmore, — but still in vain.

"I know very well what I'm talking about; and I know what your poor mother's wishes were on the subject. But it won't do, Jane. As soon as Arthur makes his appearance in the world, you'll hear very different news of him. — It would never suit that scamp of a friend of *his*, Bob Horsford, to allow him to marry *Tiny*."

Finding both gestures and entreaties unavailing to silence the uncompromising spinster, Mrs. Enmore rose and glided across the room, intending to close the door of communication. Long before she reached it, however, Miss Corbet, with a glowing face, appeared on the threshold.

"My cousin Lucretia can scarcely intend me to hear what she is saying," she observed. "Shall I take my book to my own room, till she is gone?"

"No, my dear, by no means!" cried Miss Rawdon, starting up and dragging her to a vacant chair by the fireside. "It will do you worlds of good, Tiny, to hear a little matter-of-fact. Forewarned is forearmed, my dear; and you'll learn more from me in a single hour, than from Jane, there, in a twelvemonth. It has been a great deal too much the habit of the Rawdons to bottle up their small beer; and you ought to be told before Arthur comes home from Oxford, to look sharp after your heart."

"You have forgotten our old Harley Street acquaintance," said Miss Corbet, who would have laughed outright, but for the manifest displeasure of her aunt; "when the visits of Arthur and Willy used to make the misery of my life. The days they occasionally spent with grandmamma always ended, on my part, in a flood of tears."

"*Well, take care that the months which Arthur is coming to spend with his mamma don't end, on your*

part, in another flood of tears. Arthur Rawdon's heart is as cold as a stone, and his temper as fierce as a hyæna's. 'Tis for your poor mother's sake I tell you so, Tiny, — for I loved her dearly. And so good bye, before Jane Enmore rings the bell for Harding to open the door. Don't look so frightened, child! — She has not spirit to do more than bid him, when my back is turned, say not at home to me the next time I call."

After the hurried exit of the whimsical spinster, Mrs. Enmore endeavoured to conceal her face from her niece's observation, by so vigorous an attack upon the fire, as to excuse her heightened colour when she resumed her place.

"A strange, misgoverned creature, poor Lucretia!" said she, significantly tapping her forehead; "not quite right in the upper story. There was once a talk in the family of having her shut up. But be very careful, my dear Tiny, never to mention it. If the story got into circulation, it might do us all harm. Above all, pray never let any rambling nonsense you may hear from her, make any impression on your mind."

To the queerness of the eccentric spinster, Miss Corbet had been accustomed in her childhood. In Harley Street, the name of Rawdon had ensured her toleration; and even at Heckington, she was allowed elbow-room, just as a *stag-horned old oak* was permitted here and *there in the park*; — a privileged eyesore, — a denizen

of the place, — sacred to the memory of Rawdons dead and gone.

But though it was easy to promise compliance with the injunctions of her aunt, the “impression” was already made. Sophia now discerned, or fancied she discerned why, since her arrival, Aunt Enmore had been so guarded in talking of her sons. Even to Heckington Hall, she alluded with the most circumspect reserve; and but that her elder cousin bore the name of Rawdon, Miss Corbould would have remained in doubt to which of the two she belonged. Though situated within ten miles of Grenville House, even her father never visited the place, or mentioned it in her hearing. But this, Tiny ascribed to its connection with the still lamented death of her mother.

And now, the rash garrulousness of Lucretia had perpetuated the mystery. Not another question could she ask; and when Arthur made his appearance, he must be treated with studied coldness. A sad disappointment! — For though, as a child, she had disliked and feared the young Enmores, she had hoped that, as they had no outgrown the age of tormenting cats and little cousins, they might form pleasant companions. She was sadly in want of some one with whom to talk over Scott's novels and Byron's poetry; and a lively cousin Arthur, a great Oxonian, established by their fireside in Hertford Street would certainly render it more cheerful.

Fireside pleasures, however, were becoming daily of less importance. Spring was breaking; and Mrs. Enmore

like other middle-aged ladies hybernated in London, grew less torpid as the great annual duty of card-leaving roused her into vitality. To the inexperienced country girl, the empty ceremony of pasteboard transfer, appeared a chilly mode of loving your neighbour as yourself. But it pleased her, at all events, that it should have served to deposit on Mrs. Enmore's hall table the names of Mrs. and the Miss Horsfords and of Sir James and Lady Armstead, bringing with them reminiscences of "home."

On suggesting this, however, to her aunt, she found that the acquaintanceship was not to be cultivated. Mrs. Enmore intended simply to return the cards. The Horsfords, she said, were old Heckington neighbours, with whom she had no desire to keep up an intimacy. Mrs. Horsford was — (but she must earnestly impress upon her niece the propriety of not repeating her opinion,) — a very artful woman, who had motives of her own in making so early a call.

Another disappointment! But before poor Tiny had time to fret over it, her better star defeated the churlishness of her aunt. On taking her solitary morning-walk, next day, in the Apsley Gardens adjoining Hertford Street, of which Mrs. Enmore had a key, she was warmly greeted by a lady, whose rich dress had from a distance attracted her attention.

Lady Armstead seemed sincerely glad to meet her little bridesmaid.

"But why did you never tell us at Clevelanda, my

dear Tiny," said she, "that you were coming to spend the season in town?"

"My visit to my aunt was not then settled. And I can scarcely call it spending the *season* in town; for Mrs. Enmore does not mix in society. The utmost I am likely to see of the gay world, is from our windows in Hertford Street, rolling at a distance in its carriages along Park Lane."

Lady Armstead looked steadily for a moment into the pretty face by which this statement was made; and saw that Miss Corbet spoke in a cheerful tone, without the smallest project of fastening herself upon a fashionable friend.

"But you are not inextricably tied to the apron-strings of Aunt Enmore?" said she. — "You will surely be allowed to drive with me occasionally, or even accompany me to the opera?"

"Never having foreseen so pleasant a chance," was her frank reply, "I have no idea what my aunt, who is very precise in her notions, might decide. But I am not the less grateful for your kind suggestion."

"Let us hasten off at once to Hertford Street, then, and surprise her into acquiescence," said Lady Armstead, who, having known Mrs. Enmore from childhood, was aware of her impracticable nature.

"My aunt is never visible at this hour. If you will give me leave, I will make the inquiry, and let you *know*," rejoined Miss Corbet, conscious how little Mrs

Enmore would like to be surprised in her dressing-gown, fidgeting over her account-books.

"As you please, my dear. But you are wrong. She is far more likely to refuse, if taken at leisure. Not that I or mine are favourites with Mrs. Enmore. Arthur, whom we all knew and liked as a boy at Heckington, and who became at Eton the chum of my wild brother Bob, is, or was, or fancied himself in love with Florence; and his mother, who entertains other projects for him, and is ambitious of a ladyship for a daughter-in-law, as of any other unattainable luxury, has expressed, in anything but pleasant terms, her objection to the match."

"And so they were forced to 'give it up?'" said Tiny, a little surprised.

"*Ce qui est différé n'est point perdu.* Though they cannot marry to live on air, or on five hundred a year, (all the chancellor allows him, which is pretty much the same thing,) Mrs. Enmore cannot live for ever; and at her death, he comes into the enjoyment of Heckington."

A little ashamed that a comparative stranger should know so much more than herself of her family affairs, Miss Corbet relieved herself by observing that the engaged lovers would shortly meet, as Arthur was expected in town.

"Not at present, I fancy," rejoined Lady Armstead. "He writes word that, as soon as they tear themselves away from Paris, they are to proceed to Switzerland. I

should not be much surprised if they spent next winter in Rome."

"*They?*" — reiterated the astonished Tiny; "We seem to misunderstand each other. I was alluding to my elder cousin, Arthur, who is just about to take his degree."

"My dear good child," exclaimed her companion, stopping short for a deliberate examination of Miss Corbet's honest face, "is it possible that gutta-percha old aunt of yours has managed to keep you so completely in the dark? — Arthur Rawdon took his degree — honours, too — and made his parting bow to Oxford, more than two months ago; and after a tremendous correspondence with his "maternal," as Bob calls Mrs. Enmore, ended by starting for Paris; without boring himself with a personal interview, that would have only given rise to ill-blood and-ill language. My brother, who seems to have undertaken his bear-leading, for the family advantage, writes word that they have led a jolly life in Paris; and now, having made it too hot to hold them, they are about to refresh themselves on the cooler side of the Jungfrau."

"I can scarcely say how much you surprise me!" said Miss Corbet, not a little shocked. "But perhaps I shall astonish you in my turn, when I tell you that I was unaware of Arthur's having to wait for his mother's *death for the enjoyment of his property.*"

"*The fact took everybody by surprise, about three*

years ago. Your grandfather, who appears, my dear Tiny, to have been far from a wiseacre, and fancied that the whole world revolved on the pivot of Heckington, chose to make his own will rather than admit into his secrets the family-lawyer, who might have remonstrated against his morbid pride. Unluckily, law English and the Queen's English are not synonymous; and so, without intending it, or by misplacing an S in the names of Mr. and Mrs. Enmore, he contrived that his daughter, at her husband's death, should lose the enjoyment of his property; though the heir male, her son Arthur, could not succeed to it till her own. But I am telling you what you must have heard a thousand times."

"Not once, I assure you."

"I heard enough of the story; for my father, who was Mr. Rawdon's bosom friend, and a witness of the will, was required to give evidence in the amicable Chancery suit which the executors were forced to institute, to bring law and equity to an understanding."

"And how was it decided? —"

"Much as in the case of that other celebrated amateur will — Thelluson's, — which is supposed to have ruined one of the finest properties in England. The Court of Chancery allows a handsome salary to an agent, to keep the place, I suppose, out of repair, — for poor Heckington is tumbling to pieces; — and allots a bare sufficiency to the heir, to keep him from starving."

"I thought you mentioned that Arthur was in the enjoyment of five hundred a year?"

Lady Armstead rewarded the *naïveté* of her companion by an indulgent smile.

"And so he is! — Poor fellow! — He has been victimised in succession by all his nearest relations. At this moment, as Florence knows to her cost, he has not the command of a thousand pounds: — his grandmother Rawdon having bequeathed her pickings and stealings out of the estate to a certain little Tiny Corbet; while his own father, believing that at his death he would succeed to the Heckington property, left to his youngest son his Jamaica plantations, and everything he possessed in the world."

"Not quite *every* thing. I heard my cousin Lucretia remind my aunt the other day, when she was speaking disparagingly of the West Indies, that her income was derived from thence."

"Yes — a jointure, — two thousand a year out of four. My father declares that Mr. Enmore only made so large a bid for by far the least attractive of his friend Rawdon's daughters, as a bribe to secure Heckington to his posterity. And now, dear Tiny, having exhausted my patience and your own by these family histories, good-bye! — I see my servant waiting yonder at the gate; and one of my husband's few tiresomenesses (*for which I shall have to crave your pardon if I am allowed to see you as much and as often as I wish,*) is

that neither his horses nor servants must be kept waiting."

After a cordial leave-taking, the pretty bride disappeared towards her new mansion in Park Lane; and Miss Corbet, as she returned quietly homewards, resolved within herself to lose no time in ascertaining from Mrs. Enmore whether the insight she had obtained into their family affairs were a correct version, or a Horsford fable.

But no sooner was she reinstated in the dull, methodical drawing-room in Hertford Street, with the oppressive eye of her aunt fixed on her like a leaden weight, than she became once more tongue-tied. Mrs. Enmore, when she thought proper, became inaccessible. To interrogate her on any subject which it suited her to envelope in mystery, was labour lost.

The only result, therefore, of Lady Armstead's rambling and rash confidences was, that throughout the evening, the eyes of her young friend remained fixed upon a spirited sketch, by Richmond, of her elder cousin, which adorned the room; and which, since she had overheard herself designated by her cousin Lucretia as "Mrs. Rawdon of Heckington," she had scarcely dared contemplate. Handsome, however, and manly-looking as it was, she could not reconcile to herself the idea of that fine, intelligent countenance united in holy wedlock with the *flirting and flighty* Florence Horsford. *Altogether, her mind was thoroughly disturbed.*

The moment which reveals to young people that they have been purposely kept in the dark as to their family history, is usually a dangerous crisis. * When the blind are first enabled to see, they seldom see clearly; and those who have been brought up among deceptions, have a right to infer that the deceivers entertain a mean opinion of their understanding, or, still worse, to mistrust the whole surface of life as hollow, treacherous, and unsafe.

CHAPTER IV.

INEXPERIENCED as she was, however, Tiny had already found occasion to observe how often the marriage-choice is governed by the law of contraries. Was not her giddy friend Amy matched with the grave and punctual Sir James Armstead; with twenty years difference of age between them, and a thousand in character? —

No one could explain the caprice which had suddenly placéd a pretty Lady Armstead at the head of his bachelor's table in Park Lane. Either he found his autumn dreary during the official recess, at his fine old mansion in Somersetshire; or he had become sick of the interference in his establishment of his sister, Lady Brookdale, whose children were his presumptive heirs; or he fancied that his consequence would be doubled in public life by appearing at state dinners and court-fêtes with a showy wife arrayed in the family diamonds and point lace, upon his arm. And having, in the course of an electioneering canvass in Hertfordshire, renewed his acquaintance with the Horsfords of Cleveland, whom he had known in his younger days when a visitor at Heckington Hall, he fell a victim to the sweet countenance of the eldest daughter, backed by the sweet plausibilities of her mamma.

It was just such an artless face as he could wish to find waiting for him on his return from his Office, or the House of Commons; and the absence of all sentimentality in the character of the fair Amy, which might have disappointed or disgusted a younger admirer, constituted to the practical middle-aged man, an additional charm. With little leisure for romance, the frankness with which his offer was accepted, and the readiness with which the match was concluded, inspired him with an exaggerated opinion of the good sense of the family.

Before the close of his bridal tour, however, the prattle of his pretty wife had given him a somewhat clearer insight into the manners and customs of Cleveland; and long before the close of the honeymoon, he had made up his mind that the mother-in-law who had provided her daughter with so many lessons for his subjection, should never assume in his establishment the part she ambitioned of queen-mother.

To render his quiet and dignified home a lounging-house for idle Lifeguardsmen, or sporting Baronets, in the hope of securing good partners and good matches for the younger sisters of his wife, would have been as contrary to his principles as to his taste; and, very soon after their establishment in Park Lane for the season, he made manifest his intentions.

But even on his wedding-day, the quiet, lady-like manners of Miss Corbet had attracted the attention c

Sir James Armstead, as affording a charming contrast to the pretentious fashionability of his sisters-in-law; and as his original acquaintance with the Horsford family had commenced under the roof of the Rawdons of Heckington, he rejoiced to find his wife disposed to console herself for the absence of her sisters, by selecting a companion so desirable.

He called in person on Mrs. Enmore, to renew their long-neglected acquaintance; and either because she pitied him for having fallen a dupe to the Horsfords, or because the "auld lang syne" reminiscences to which he adverted, found their way to her frigid heart, she made no objection to his proposal that Miss Corbet should be frequently spared to Lady Armstead, to whom her company would be a valuable acquisition.

From that moment, the London horizon of poor Tiny brightened. Drives, dinners, and operas were never wanting. The Horsfords were not yet in town; and Amy was over-joyed to share with a friend of her own age her pleasures and pains: the latter being represented by little friendly dinner-parties to the official colleagues of Sir James, — styled by his young wife the Conscript Fathers of Downing Street.

"I wish I found their company as edifying as you do," said Lady Armstead, while taking her coffee with Miss Corbet, one Sunday evening, after one of Sir James's "*sociable dinners*." "*But when I used to accuse Mr. Clevelands neighbours of talking shop, — turn-*

pike trusts, patent ploughs, or the Union dietary, — I certainly did not expect to find in London, a set of men as tiresome, and a jargon quite as technical. I can hardly stand it when, after prosing for an hour, as they did to-day about Friday's debate, they turn to me with a smile of conscious superiority, and simper condescendingly, 'I am sadly afraid all this is not very amusing to your ladyship!' — Amusing!" —

"But couldn't 'your ladyship' contrive to *find* amusement in their conversation?" rejoined Tiny, — taking the coffee-cup from her languid hand. "It was said in Hertfordshire, when you married, that Sir James Armstead was one of the first men in the House of Commons, and likely to rise to the first posts in the State, — which must make you very proud."

"Country neighbourhoods, my dear Tiny, are apt to view men and things through magnifying glasses. However, my husband is highly thought of by judges somewhat more capable of appreciating him than the makebelieve squires of our Lilliputian county."

"No treason against Hertfordshire!" exclaimed Miss Corbet, laughing.

"Then allow me to say my worst of those tedious old men who dined here to-day. That prince of bores and type of an Official who sat by you, Barton Frere, (as smooth, polished, and uninteresting as a billiard ball!) is my husband's bosom friend, and of course my *bête noire*. Because for the last thirty years he has

lived with his nose on a desk, write, write, writing what nobody cares to read, — my husband calls him a valuable servant of the country, and wishes me to treat him with the highest consideration.”

“I thought him very good-natured in taking so much pains to entertain a girl of my age,” pleaded Miss Corbet.

“It is the very pains he takes which exasperates me,” cried Lady Armstead, pettishly: “talking to one about the Opera or Park, with his thoughts evidently a thousand miles off, and his eyes looking into next year, — just as he would take a doll out of his pocket, and dandle it to pacify a child! —”

“We are both of us children to *him*,” rejoined Tiny, forgetting that the bald-headed Treasury-man was the contemporary of Sir James.

“I don’t think age has much to do with it,” rejoined Amy, with a heavy sigh. “But it makes my heart ache to think that official routine may in time wear down my husband to the same mechanical insipidity. In town, he is not the same man he used to be at Clevelands. Alas, alas! if he should ever grow as great a bore as the rest of his prosy colleagues!”

“Not likely! — See how they all defer to his opinion.” —

“They ought, — for he is fifty times as clever. *His* conversation is not made up of a patchwork of Blue Books; *nor does he fancy, like Barton Frere, that so*

long as his bald head performs its humdrum routine, the balance of the State is secure. But admit that it is provoking to see a man squander his whole understanding upon politics! After pumping dry in parliament such questions as the Bank Charter, or Secondary Punishments, surely it is unnecessary to serve them up as a *réchauffée* at the dinner-table!"

"But since at Newmarket, nothing is talked of but racing, or in Leicestershire but hunting, surely it is natural that M.Ps should discuss among themselves their debates and divisions?"

"Then they have no business to marry!" retorted Lady Armstead, in a more acrimonious tone. "To own the truth, Tiny, the reason I am so much out of sorts with official life is that I had set my heart on a tour to the German baths; and Sir James informed me, this morning, that the session is to last till September, when it will be too late for the Rhine. — Think of dragging on in London till September!"

"But *must* Sir James remain in town till the close of the session?"

"To the last day! — He is wanted. The broad arrow is upon him. All winter too we must be in town; — I, who so longed for a Carnival in Rome!"

"You will manage it in time," said Miss Corbet, who, though some years younger than her friend, could not yet look upon one-and-twenty as the decline of *life*.

"Yes, in time! — I must take patience — the last thing one likes to take. I wish you could have seen the faces of Mrs. Warwick and Lady Brookdale (Armstead's sisters), when I said the other day that I wished with all my heart the ministry had been defeated on the Currency question, for that nothing would please me better than for my husband to be out of office."

"I dare say they forgave you, on reflecting that you wished it only to enjoy more of his company."

"Not they — they are women who seldom reflect, and never forgive. They were angry because a change of ministry would affect their own loaves and fishes. — Mrs. Warwick is wife to the Dean of C——, who is looking to a bishopric; and Lord Brookdale has a place in the Household."

"Are they kind to you, Amy?" inquired Miss Corbet, who could not, after what she had heard, ask whether they were agreeable.

"They are civil and attentive — not for my sake, but their brother's. But they cannot endure me or any one belonging to me. Mamma says they wanted their brother to form a higher connection."

"When they find you make him happy, their civility will perhaps warm into kindness."

"No, they will never like me; but so long as Armstead does, it does not signify. I am half afraid, however, that it is Lady Brookdale who has set my husband against my sisters, and Mrs. Warwick who has advised

him not to let mamma obtain a footing in the house. — He hinted as much, when remonstrating with me about that foolish speech of mine concerning the change of ministry."

"For which surely Mrs. Horsford was not answerable?"

"No, indeed. It was quite — an after-thought that Florence could have accompanied us to Baden, where she would meet Arthur Rawdon; and that Carry would have been the better for a winter at Rome. Yet Armstead fancied that both projects were the suggestion of poor mamma."

It was difficult for Tiny not to remember how warmly she had heard Mrs. Horsford eulogise the kindness of her dear Amy in promising to make a foreign tour for the benefit of her sisters.

"However, it don't much matter," resumed Lady Armstead. "In September, we go down to Higham Grange; and there, at least, Armstead's time will be at his own disposal."

"And you will enjoy your rides and walks all the more for your London privations."

"Only, however, till Barton Frere and the rest of the bald-headed coots rejoin us in October, for pheasant shooting!" said Amy, fretfully.

And as her friend perceived that she was bent upon retaining a grievance, she kept to herself her opinion that, next year, with a nursery to occupy her attention

Armstrong would have less leisure to pine after the perpetual gossip of her sisters, and flatteries of her mother.

It did, however, strike her as somewhat uncomplimentary that, when Sir James made his appearance in the drawing-room (and not till the carriage was announced to convey her home), he came alone. Scarcely to be wondered at, however, considering how little pains was taken by the young wife of their colleague to conciliate the good will of his friends.

She, on the contrary, without pains of any kind, had succeeded in pleasing them.

"You must ask Miss Corbet here often," said Sir James, when she was gone. "Frere and Marsham think her a very intelligent, agreeable girl."

"It will be pleasanter for you, my dear," added he, imprinting a marital kiss on the cheek of his pretty wife, "to have a companion of your own sex and age, while we old fogeys are prosing over the affairs of the nation. And my friends would be mortified, Amy, if, because my house has acquired a new attraction, I discontinued the hospitality they were accustomed to enjoy here when I was a bachelor."

The "intelligent and agreeable girl," meanwhile, on arriving at home, a little wearied by the peevish lamentations of Park Lane, was struck on the threshold by a pungent smell, such as had sometimes saluted her in passing the Blue Lion at Grenfield; and was consequently *acceptable as a village reminiscence*. Mrs. Enmore's

venerable butler had probably profited by his mistress's Sunday evening doze, to indulge in a pipe!

She was about to pass the drawing-room door, and proceed to her own room, — the hour being long past at which her aunt was accustomed to retire for the night, — when the increased vapour of tobacco determined her to open the door; and, lo! the fire was still blazing, — the lamp still on the table; and beside it sat, on one side, Mrs. Enmore, grim and perpendicular; on the other, an individual bearded like a pard, from whose garments emanated the unwonted vapours pervading the house.

She scarcely knew whether to advance or retire, for the hirsute stranger did not rise from his chair. The interview she had interrupted was perhaps private and confidential.

"My son Willy, — who arrived just after you left home," said Mrs. Enmore, perceiving that she did not recognise her cousin.

"Pray add who landed this morning at the Tower Stairs, and whose baggage is still in the Custom House!" exclaimed William Enmore, by way of apology for his travelling blouse, on perceiving into how pretty a girl Tiny Corbet had progressed, since the Harley Street days when he used to fasten squibs and crackers to the leg of her school-room table.

And as, still without rising, he tendered her his

hand, Miss Corbet, in order to prove her forgiveness of former injuries, shook it heartily.

"You are wonderfully grown, Tiny," he added, after extending his rough arm, and dragging forward a chair for her by his side. "You promised to be a stunted little thing! — You are quite an agreeable surprise!" —

"Surprise for surprise, Willy! You are the last person I expected to find here," answered Miss Corbet, amused by the contrast between her cousin's uncouth dress and manners, and the artificial formality of the circle she had just quitted.

"So my mother has been telling me. But she did not, like you, add that the surprise was by any means agreeable. Her invitations to her second son, never very urgent, ought to have been enhanced of late by the information that I had so pretty a cousin residing under her roof."

"As you had announced your intention of remaining in Germany till next autumn," replied his mother, "there seemed no great occasion to acquaint you with what was passing in Hertford Street."

"Because, before next autumn, I scarcely hoped to imbibe sufficient High Dutch to qualify me for diplomatic preferment. But as I learn from Harman's letters that I am much more wanted among the sugar-canes at Fredville, than for an apprenticeship in the F. O., if you have any regard for your jointure, mother, you will approve of my change of plans."

"*Plans!*" — muttered the thin lips of Mrs. Enmore to intimate that the conduct of her son was actuated only by caprice.

"Yes, — *plans*. I should, in fact, have sailed Jamaica by the last West-India mail, mother, had not a well-meaning friend written me word of Arthur's unexpected departure for the continent. The representatives of the House of Rawdon of Heckington being otherwise disposed of, I was in hopes you would extend a few days' hospitality to your pariah, on the eve of his exit."

Mrs. Enmore was upon tender-hooks. It was wonderful to her to have the family feuds she had been so long endeavouring to conceal from her niece, thus so carelessly unveiled; and the habits of the house had been so disturbed by Willy's arrival, that late as was the hour, the ear of old Harding might still be within reach of the keyhole!

"At all events, Willy," said she, "let us adjourn to-morrow our further discussions. We are all thoroughly knocked up."

The traveller made no objection. But for full hours after the family had retired to rest, Miss Corbridge heard the new comer rattling the furniture, and packing the room over her own, with most independent disregard to the repose of his cohabitants. The fumes of tobacco, which before exhaled only from his garments and person, now clearly intimated that he was solacing himself for his chilly reception by a pipe.

Miss Corbet was thoroughly astonished. Since her discovery, at six years old, that her father's loving wife was only her stepmother, she had never felt more surprised than that Mrs. Enmore should have been so close with her concerning the disunion between her sons; or that either of them should venture to set the rules of that methodical mansion so thoroughly at defiance: — braving not only her tyrannical aunt, but her aunt's besetting tyrant, old Harding. At one o'clock in the morning, the portly Major Domo had to wheeze up to the third floor with cans of hot water; and was able to report on the morrow in the housekeeper's room, that Mr. William had endangered the safety of the family by the rash and unprincipled act of smoking, not under the canopy of heaven, but that of his French bed! —

CHAPTER V.

Mrs. ENMORE, whose movements were as exact as those of a chronometer, made her appearance next morning, at the breakfast-table, twenty minutes before her usual time; with the laudable view of preventing a *tête-à-tête* between the cousins.

But she might have spared the hurry which caused her juvenile "front" to be put on a little awry. For though Tiny was still loitering over her toilet, less with a view to unusual beautification than because conscious that her aunt would be better pleased if Willy poured out his own tea than that she should assist in the concoction, — another "cousin" had usurped her place at the table. When the lady of the house rustled in, *there* sat Lucretia Rawdon; — having laid aside her bonnet and shawl, to make herself completely at home.

"Why don't you thank me, Jane," said she, "for having procured you a sight of your Hopeful? Willy would have been off straight to the land of green-ginger and yellow-fever, my dear, if I hadn't given poor Abel a hint that Cain was out on his travels!"

The indignant old lady, who scarcely needed this *certification* that Lucretia was the "well-meaning friend" *who had so officiously interfered in her family arrange*

ments, would have perhaps been betrayed for once in her life into a rash rejoinder, but that Tiny, who had heard the stealthy footsteps of her aunt descend the stairs, having now entered the room, was too noisily greeted, both by her kinswoman and cousin, for the reproof to be audible.

"Let me look at you by daylight, Tiny," cried Willy, snatching her hand, but still not discontinuing the munching of his dry toast. — "A good honest English complexion!" he added, after a deliberate survey, which certainly did not tend to diminish its brilliancy; "White and red, that scorn to keep the secrets of the heart, to which they act as interpreter."

"Though Cousin Jane is always taxing me with idle talking and idle writing," interposed Lucretia, without ceding an inch of the place she had usurped at the breakfast-table on the arrival of her formidable hostess, "admit, my dear Willy, that I said not a word of Tiny Corbet's roses and lilies, to accelerate your visit to London?"

At this insinuation, Mrs. Enmore plunged her spoon into the Dundee marmalade, as viciously as if to alleviate her irritation.

"It would have been too much to relate in one and the same despatch concerning the attractions of Hertford Street, that Arthur was absent, and so charming a substitute arrived in his place," replied the Dresden student. "But that you brought me here, on any pretext, Lucre-

tia, my angel, I am prepared to remember to the end of my days, in Guava jelly and sour pine-apples."

In hopes to pacify the ire which Mrs. Enmore was at no pains to disguise, the offending spinster proceeded to inquire of her *protégé* why he did not endeavour to convert the itinerant German artist, in whose gear he had chosen to present himself, into an Englishman of better degree; and on learning that his luggage was still unextricated from the Custom House, she offered to go in search of it herself.

"A million of thanks, good old soul!" was his cool rejoinder. "But being a most despotic master, I find it safer to be my own servant. I shall be off to the city as soon as breakfast is over."

"At least let me bear you company in your car Willy," she persisted. "I have still a great deal, my dear boy, to tell you."

"Not half so much as I have to reflect upon, my lovely Lu. Besides, as sugars are falling, I mean to go by the Bus."

"Why not say, in half the number of words, that you don't want me?"

"Because, though I am come from the country plain-dealing and plain-speaking," he retaliated, rising and throwing his napkin on the table, "I am aware that, in London, politeness is as imperative *one of the assessed taxes*; particularly between *months of May and July*, when parliament is

and truthtelling an exciseable commodity. *Leben Sie wohl!* therefore, my kind friend; and don't, if you value my cousinly affection, pull caps or wigs with my lady-mother, after my departure."

Lucretia, however, took care not to be left behind. She had not courage to defy the storm already growling in the breast of the outraged Mrs. Enmore.

Even her niece looked forward with awe to a *tête-à-tête* with the ruffled parent. But she did not know her aunt. Like the leaden soldiers, which, on being overturned, spontaneously right themselves, she had become as composed as ever, before her Teutonised son managed to reach as far as the corner of Park Lane.

When Tiny proffered her assistance in removing some books and boxes from a small library on the ground-floor, which Mrs. Enmore proposed to devote to the use of Willy — probably to leave him no pretext for quartering himself and his meerschaum in the drawing-room, — her aid was graciously declined.

"I need not trouble you, my dear," said her aunt; "Harding and I can manage it very well between us. If Lady Armstead should call for you this morning, (as I think you told me she intended,) there is nothing to prevent your driving out with her; or even dining in Park Lane, if invited."

She was *not* invited; the Armsteads being otherwise engaged. Nor, had the considerate Amy been ever so desirous of *Tiny's company*, would she have interfered.

to break up a family circle so exciting to her curiosity as the one recently united in Hertford Street.

"I don't know Willy Enmore," said she, after receiving an account of his arrival: — "that is, I have never seen him since, being nearly of an age, we used to play together at puss-in-the-corner, at Heckington. But I have heard a great deal of him from Arthur —"

"A great deal of good, I hope?"

"As good as could be expected, considering that they hate each other as intensely as the first-created brothers. I should not be surprised however, if Arthur were most in fault. *He* takes after his Creole father, who was as handsome and ferocious as a tiger. His brother, I have heard, inherits the lymphatic coolness of the Rawdons. But with the contrariety so often observed in human preferences, the quiet boy was always the darling of his passionate father; — the tiger's whelp, of your aunt."

"Which explains Lucretia Rawdon's hints this morning concerning unjust favouritism!" —

"Not *hints*, dear Tiny; unless the spiteful old maid talks very differently to her family, and to the rest of the world. I have no doubt she accused Mrs. Enmore, in the plainest English, of not daring to shelter her younger son, had Arthur been within reach."

Miss Corbet could scarcely deny the charge.

"One of the reasons, assigned for her coldness to Master Abel," continued Lady Armstead, "is that the *defunct* tiger, when he found the Rawdon estates were to

descend to his elder son, made a will in favour of Willy, bequeathing him the Fredville plantation; which, till West India property of all kinds went to what Bob calls 'immortal smash,' was nearly as valuable as Heckington. As it is, Willy is in enjoyment of *his* fortune. Whereas Cain has still to wait."

"But why should my aunt resent against her son the terms of his father's will?"

"Because she is the sort of cold-blooded despot, (far worse to deal with, my dear Tiny, than the hottest-headed tyrant!) who cannot bear that any one belonging to her should be independent. She is fond of *you*, I suspect, only because you are a quiet little Guinea-pig who dare not say her nay."

"She will have a great many nays said to her, I am afraid, by her wilful son!" — said Miss Corbét, gravely. "The peaceful days of Hertford Street are at an end. I am almost inclined to write to papa, and beg him to fetch me back to Grenfield House —"

"To relapse into the Sleeping Beauty in the wood? — No, no, Tiny! — Don't be such a little coward! — Take your courage between your teeth, and sit by, while the others fight it out. At Grenfield, my dear, you are only in the way!"

"I begin to think I am in the way, every where," replied Miss Corbet, with a desponding sigh. "I have often fancied that children whose mothers die in their *infancy*, *had best be shut up with them in the coffin!* —"

I am wicked, however, to say so," she added, — tea gushing into her eyes, "for never had poor girl a better father, or kinder stepmother, than I have."

"At all events," rejoined Amy, as at that moment they stopped at Mrs. Enmore's door, "don't choose mother-in-law out of *this* house, Tiny. I would as soon settle for life under the shadow of an iceberg, as under the wing of Mrs. Enmore."

But either the iceberg was melting, or Mrs. Enmore like a horticulturist who, to determine the nature of the flowers and fruit of a new plant, exposes it to artificial warmth, was just then unusually gracious. Her son and niece scarcely knew what to make of her. The family dinner passed off almost cheerfully.

Before it was quite over, however, Willy began ask himself whether the unusual candour of his mother might not be a wile, purporting to throw him off his guard; like the gold displayed by sharpers to dazzle the eyes of some intended dupe.

A child systematically deceived by its parents seldom very ingenuous; but adopts the French adage "*A trompeur, trompeur et demi.*" Neither of the young Enmores was in the habit of placing his mother in confidence. Instead, therefore, of disclosing, as she expected, the programme of his Jamaica expedition, he began recounting as much as it was desirable to relate of his life at Dresden; — astonishing his pretty cousin

ry quaint pictures of the mingled courtliness and boorishness of the Saxon Athens.

“My mother, you are to know,” said he, as if wholly verlooking the presence of Mrs. Enmore, “sent me, two years ago, to Germany, on pretence of completing my diplomatic education. As if any spot on the face of the evil’s earth were calculated for the purpose like Paris; — Paris, which is capable of smoothing the tongue of a Caliban, and converting a Thug into a Chesterfield. Whereas the earnestness of German nature and German language resemble a ploughshare, endeavouring to fence down a Damascus blade.”

“If such were your opinion, why not remonstrate?” inquired Mrs. Enmore. “You never suggested the advantages to be secured by a sojourn in France.”

“Because I knew that your real object was anything but the one assigned. Lucretia Rawdon informed me, long before I started for the Elbe, that you were suffering from the prevailing monomania that mastery of the German language is the only stepping-stone to preferment; that you were perpetually citing the number of adventurers who have become top-sawyers, by trading on that very small capital: — German being as much the Court language of the house of Hanover, as French of our Norman kings.”

“But what pretension have *my* sons to become courtiers at all?” said *his* mother almost grinding her teeth.

Secretary of Legation, the son of E. would be nearly as much out of place as Usher, or Equerry."

"The son of Enmore the planter, is a descendant of the Rawdons of H. grandfather's brother, Sir Henry Rawdon Berlin."

"And my grandfather's sister married Lord Willy; "which, though it turns a family, does not qualify her grandfather's peerage, or prevent us from being a people."

Mrs. Enmore glanced nervously at the young man who should be there, on pretence of a secret mission.

above mere mercenary considerations. An attaché, though unpaid, enjoys a brilliant position at foreign courts."

"As a dangler at *fêtes* and galas, perhaps; — as a fraction of the gimerackery of social life! — But our Dresden phrenologists would have apprised you, mother, that in place of the bump of veneration indispensable to a courtier or diplomat, *my* cranium exhibits a cavity. A royal antechamber would be as insupportable to me as an ambassador's *Kanzlei*. As to the princely income I am shortly to derive from my sugar and rum — (I am opening in the grocery line, Tiny, will you give me your dear little custom?) — I intend to devote it to the establishment of a cheerful bachelor home; where I may smoke my meerschaum in the drawing-room, and laugh in my chimneycorner with my friends Henry Heine and John Paul."

Concluding these Germans friends, of whom she heard for the first time, to be two of his loose student companions, Mrs. Enmore was ineffably disgusted. But true to her new system of conciliation, she was about to say that she should be very happy to see them to dinner, if they happened to be in town, when her son, whose spirits were unusually excited by a slight excess of Bass, and the smiling face of his young cousin, resumed his rambling babble.

"Don't fancy, however, mother, that I mean to be a Robinson Crusoe; though *my* old sledging-cloak hanging in the hall, seems to accuse me of going clothed in the

skins of beasts. You are in no great haste I am told for a daughter-in-law and grandchildren, to put your juvenile curls out of countenance. I have heard, with some satisfaction, of your snubbing Arthur in flirtations. But be warned that your younger totem has too much of his father's tropical blood in his veins to be parent-pecked in such matters. When I have chosen my Joan, my Joan she shall be, — whether find her picking grapes in a Rhenish vineyard, — mincing her words at a Belgravian tea-fight, — bearing patiently with my boorish egotism in Hertford Street, May Fair."

But for the last clause of his rhodomontade, Miss Enmore would have preserved her composure. But bold a thrust was too much for her; and though Mr Corbet's strawberries lay untasted on her plate, she received at once the masonic signal which serves to transport ladies from the dessert-table to the drawing-room. Instead, however, of the explosion of wrath for which Tiny had prepared herself the moment they were alone, the first question of her aunt regarded Lady Armistead and the Horsfords.

"You have, I am sure, too much discretion, Tiny," said she, "to talk to your friends in Park Lane of Wilton's eccentric habits, or reckless assertions" —

But before she could conclude her exhortation, *William* himself was in the room.

"Don't expect me, mother," said he, undauntedly

circling her waist, ere she could take possession of her stately arm-chair, "to indulge in the deplorable Great Britain-ism of finishing my dinner alone. You must either see me through my claret, or allow me to share your coffee. Tiny, dear, can't you give a poor fellow a little music to take the taste of maternal lectures out of his ears?"

"The best music I am able to afford you is so *very* little," replied his cousin, "that it would scarcely satisfy a person rendered fastidious by long residence in Germany. I have had no master, Willy, — scarcely what could be called a piano, — since we parted in Harley Street."

"Haven't you? — Bravo! Then there's hope that you still play and sing like a child. Except in theatres or concerts, I detest elaborate music. Half the female voices one hears are worn threadbare by over work. Give me only some of the dear old things I used to love as a boy, before I was Beethovened and Mendelssohned out of my senses."

Miss Corbet still betrayed reluctance; less because ashamed of her want of proficiency than because of the stern displeasure contracting the brow of her aunt.

"Allow me to encourage you by firing the first shot!" cried Willy; coolly taking possession of his mother's favourite chair. — "Shall it be a scene from *Oberon*? — Or will you please to have a *Volks-Lied*?"

Before she could answer, he burst into a touching

ballad of Uhland, in a rich mellow baritone, that could well dispense with instrumental accompaniments. It was impossible to sing with greater feeling or more perfect intonation. Even Mrs. Enmore, unused as she was to the melting mood, was touched by that exquisite melody; and though Tiny understood not a word of the language it served to interpret, she could not withdraw her eyes or ears from her gifted cousin. Fairly captivated, she no longer thought him uncouth or scampish-looking; and her rapt attention was even more gratifying than his mother's unexpected *encore*.

Like other popular performers, he complied with the call by favouring them with a new song, — a lighter strain purporting to provoke mirth instead of tears. Tiny thought she had never heard anything half so joyous; the gay *refrain* which, he vainly protested, required chorus of *Burschen* to do it justice.

But how, after so charming a performance, was she to inflict upon him the tiresome old pieces and obsolete waltzes of Strauss, which composed her stock? Unwilling alike to refuse or comply, it was, indeed, relief when after a third ballad (a French one, "*Marthe la Bretonne*" selected in consideration of his cousin's ignorance of German) — Willy started up, and expressing a fear he was already late, produced from his pocket a bill and stall ticket for the Olympic theatre.

"I'm glad to find that my loving countrymen at last got an actor," said he, as he was leaving.

m. "And I must make haste and get a glimpse of
a wonderful Robson before I go nigger-driving; for
though I arrived in town with every intention of spung-
ing upon my mother for a few weeks, I see by the
amphiness of her countenance that it will be wiser
to limit my visit in Hertford Street to half as many
days!" —

THE weeks thus prospectively announced as the limit of his visit, became doubled remained his mother's guest. Perhaps derived pleasure from the German lessons his cousin; perhaps, because having tried and transferred his smoking to the Traveller enjoy the benefit of the sacrifice. But it was because he thought his company acceptable whom in her absence he usually designated as elderly party."

"No need to be so fidgety about my age longer," said he, one day, after luncheon. Enmore had expressed some vague feeling the sailing of the *Western* in

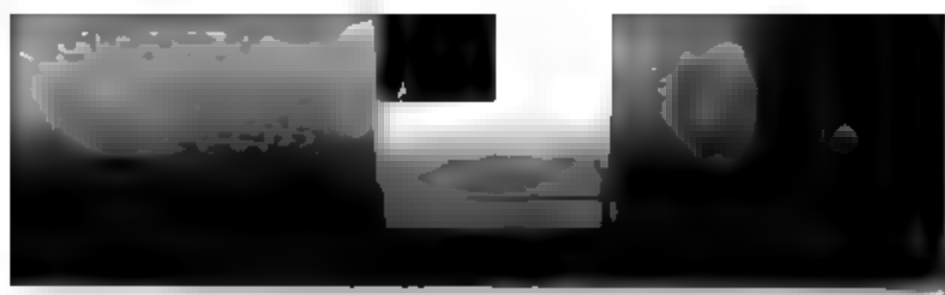
he should be under the necessity of depriving her of his valuable services; "Master William's rackety ways having thoroughly upset the house."

"I *do* suppose it, mother. Though you really oughtn't; for by idling away another month in London, I should avoid the hurricane season. And you well know that, more than once, hurricanes have shaved the poor Fredville Plantation as bare as my hand."

"The greater the chance that it will not again be visited," replied Mrs. Enmore, with the cool computation of an actuary.

"And I can assure and promise you, my best of parents," resumed the dauntless Willy, "that you have nothing to fear from the residence of your son and niece under the same roof. Tiny goes with Lady Armstead to balls and operas, where she makes grand acquaintance, and learns to look down upon her ragged colt of a cousin; while I, believe me, prefer the homeliest milkmaid tripping on the banks of the Elbe, to the finest London lady, with all her frills and fribbledom! — To make your blessed old mind easy, dear mamma, know that I would not marry a princess of the Blood, if only half so stupid about conjugating her verbs, as our poor little Tiny."

Whether these sarcasms proved satisfactory or unsatisfactory to the lady of the house, to his cousin they were far from agreeable. She thought him both uncivil and unkind; *and when Florence and Carry Horsford*



entreated her to bring Mr. Enmore some day to walk the Apsey Gardens, that they might personally investigate his resemblance to his brother Arthur, she assuaged them not only that Mrs. Enmore would disapprove such a proceeding, but that her German tutor was unworthy their interest. "They would probably decide him to be ill-dressed, ill-looking, and ill-bred." Poor little Tiny! —

"Sir James always calls you the Mirror of Truth, dear," exclaimed Sir James's wife, shortly afterwards when Miss Corbet, on entering her dressing-room, found her alone. "Yet after all, you are as sad a hypocrite as the rest of us. You refused to bring your cousin to the Gardens, at the entreaty of Flo. and Carry, because 'my aunt' disapproves of your walking out together."

"And so, believe me, she does."

"And you described him to me, as a sort of hideous monster, smelling of tobacco, and costumed like a chorus-singer in the Freischütz."

"I told you that he looked quite unlike a London man."

"Then who, pray, was the well-dressed, handsome young stranger, on whose arm you were espied, one evening, by Barton Frere; as he was driving at the rate of twelve miles an hour, to join one of the love-feasts of the saintly Lady Hassock, who gives fashionable dinner-parties after presiding at her servants' family prayers?"

a handsome young stranger was Willy; who, arrived late from the country, and encountered man on his way to the Gardens to escort me now fit to take his place."

And when is to be the happy day, Tiny?"

"What happy day?" naïvely inquired Miss Corbet, as looking forward only to the dreary one fixed on her cousin's departure.

"Don't play at artlessness, my dear child; you per-
understand me. If two young lovers, on the verge
of discretion, spending the midsummer-month
under the roof of a cross old mother, are not
into matrimony by her setting her face against it,
it's at an end! —"

"You did but know how completely you are
!" rejoined Miss Corbet, looking more distressed
barrassed.

"Is there really no matrimony in the case? Then the
man is greatly to blame. Such a couple, such
a mother, and such a position, as Barton Frere
observes, would make the fortune of an *Opéra*
."

It was not till tears actually flowed from the eyes of
her friend, that Lady Armstead desisted from
which, like most of her conversation, "meant
" But Tiny happened to be peculiarly sensitive
subject of the walk so unluckily detected by
a spy. It was the only confidential interview

she had ever enjoyed with her cousin; and had left as it found them, friends. — At seventeen, something is expected from a furtive *tête-à-tête*.

Though startled to find him waiting for her gate of the gardens, she had expressed only delight seeing him again; for his unexplained absence through the day, and even from the dinner-table, had rendered Mrs. Enmore sullen, and herself anxious. His visits were usually as punctual as Harding's almost mathematical exactitude could desire; and the deviation was unacceptable.

"Where do you think I have been, dear?" he whispered he, drawing her arm under his; and, instead of directing her steps towards Hertford Street, proceeded into the park, which the rising dewy and fragrant foliage rendered peculiarly inviting.

"To Richmond, perhaps, — or Greenwich?"

"You are not talking to your cousin Arthur. I am not a swell. I do not frequent fashionable haunts no! — I have been spending the day in the very place where I first beheld a certain little white-frocked girl, who I have since discovered to be the same who stole Sophia Corbet."

"Heckington?"

"Heckington."

"How I wish I had been with you!"

"Not half so much as I do. It would have been like having a sister by my side who enjoyed and devalued the whole thing with precisely my own feelings."

And the adopted sister's arm was kindly, if not tenderly, pressed to his side.

"You don't remember the day, Tiny, when we were first there together? You were too young for anything to make an impression on you. But *I* recollect it as if it were yesterday. I suppose I must have been about twelve years old, for we were just landed from the West Indies; and it was the first specimen I ever saw of an English home — English verdure — English flowers — English fruits."

"And then it was Heckington, — the dear old family seat! —"

"Don't take it in that light, Tiny, or I won't tell you another word! — 'Tis that very Rawdon-of-Heckingtonism which has undone our family; — making fools of us, or worse, from one generation to another. That name — that place — and the associations connected with them, caused my wrong-headed old grandfather to hate his daughters, and your mother and mine to detest each other, just as Arthur and I do now; besides rendering the lives of my parents — Well, well! perhaps we had better say no more about it!"

"Yes, *do*, — pray *do*!" said Miss Corbet, with such earnest unction that it would have been difficult to refuse.

"As to my parents, then, since you choose me to be so undutifully explicit, their union, arising on both sides from *motives of interest*, was thoroughly unhappy. —

No two people were ever less suited to each other. My father's blood was lava — my mother's snow-water. She trembled before *him* as a tyrant — *he* shuddered at *her* as an intractable mule. And between the two sisters there was quite as little affection. My grandfather, displeased at your mother's choice, had promised mine that her eldest son should become Rawdon of Heckington; and when my aunt Sophia at length married, and gave promise of an heir, my father was furious, and carried off his wife and sons to Jamaica, where he led us the life of — no matter what! Even when your poor mother died, and the birth of a certain little Tiny rendered the previous heir-presumptive Rawdon of Heckington, he was not pacified. My foolish mother, regarding that possession as secondary only to the British empire, could talk or think of nothing else; and chose to discover that the climate of the West Indies was hurrying her to the grave."

"But that was not the fault of poor Heckington?" pleaded Miss Corbet.

"Heckington was the grain of mustard-seed which produced the mighty evil. Arthur and I loved each other dearly, till my mother began to call him by his new name, and defer to him far more than to my father; and my grandfather's absurd will imparted an altered value to every member of the family. Dreadful to think of — *is it not, Tiny?* — that false pride and lucre-love

should be able to strengthen or weaken the holiest ties of blood!"

"They are *not* — they are *not*!" — cried Miss Corbet, with honest indignation. "*My* father is a very poor man. But the acquisition of millions would not influence by the worth of a doit his affection for his wife or child."

"Wait till he is tried, my dear little enthusiast. But whether Mr. Corbet be either Saint or Philosopher, *my* father was *not*. His chief reason for remaining in Jamaica years and years after his affairs would have been seriously benefited by a visit to England, was to mortify his wife by proving his indifference to Heckington. At last, the state of her health rendered a change of climate indispensable: and then it was, Tiny, that, about a week after our landing, you came with Grandmamma Rawdon to visit us; — a poor prim little thing, whom we tormented as children do a moth, only because of its helplessness."

"How afraid of you all I was. I don't know which I feared most, the scorpions and snakes preserved in spirits, which you brought with you as specimens of West Indian produce; or Mr. Enmore, who, after pinching my ear, bade me be a good girl and not cry; or his sons, who wished for nothing better than to make me cry from morning till night."

"As far as my own feelings were concerned, Tiny, I *promise* you I was charmed with my little cousin

domestic bliss which is as full of spites as
 as the Tower of London of small arms, I
 grandmother declare that her 'dear Sophia's
 for Heckington had been the cause of h
 leath; and that it was hard upon poor h
 stripped of her inheritance in her cradle
 ther drew up, looking Nemesis-like and
 we have often seen her. But when her b
 disposed to be pugnacious, he, of cours
 osite side. 'It is hard on the poor little
 'But we must make her amends by m
 arthur. Here's my hand upon it, Mrs. Ra
 7 shall be Mrs. Rawdon of Heckington.'"
 Miss Corbet could not repress a start of
 of indignation.

nt to reside with your father; and not very long afterwards, mine was taken from us."

"Just as you were all happily established."

"Established, but not happily. Arthur, the grandee of the family, was at Eton, and the scrub, my unworthy father, at Charter House. But a new source of family advances had arisen. My father, a just man, though violent, had not chosen that one of his two sons should monopolise the fortunes of the family; and believing young Rawdon of Heckington to be nobly provided for, bequeathed to poor Willy Enmore his West Indian estates."

"A very equitable distribution."

"It seemed so. But when the lawyers came to settle his will, and my grandfather's, it appeared that my mother's jointure was assessed on the Fredville Plantation; and that, except a small annuity with which it was encumbered in her favour, the income of the Heckington estate was to be tied up till her death. No one can reside there till she dies; and Arthur has at present nothing but what the Elderly Party is pleased to allow him."

"But grandpapa never could have intended this?"

"Who can say? — He appears to have been a pompous old gentleman, enamoured of his family consequence; and I may have been desirous of creating a great estate. In all events, as my mother was at that period of her life a *professed invalid*, he did not calculate on her

surviving his robust son-in-law; or his son-in-law's selection of the younger of his whelps to succeed to West India property."

"Very unfortunate for Arthur! —"

"Very unfortunate for us all. The ill-blood created, will never be purified. We are an unami family, Tiny; — all but that good little Mrs. Raw of Heckington, who, rich or poor, has never exhibit the cloven foot."

"But could you not share with your brother property of your father?"

"Silly child! Have I yet entered into possession of it? For two months to come, I am not of age. The object of my Jamaica expedition is to examine the nature and extent of my property, and make arrangements for the spot with my father's agents and executors, Har and Co. But you don't know Arthur, or myself, if I think he would lightly accept a benefaction; or I would lightly tender one likely to be refused. Can it enter into the conception of that tender nature of yours, how much envy, hatred, malice, all uncharitableness have been engendered between my mother's different estimation of the proud party of Heckington, and the rich young sugar-monger. Elderly Party has done her best to make us hate each other, as Lucretia says, like Cain and Abel!"

"But Nature has done twice and thrice as much as

in a contrary direction!" exclaimed his cousin, with glistening eyes.

"We shall see! — If no officious mischief-maker interfere to thrust us prematurely into each other's arms, Tiny, we may come round in time. Particularly when a pretty little sister-in-law presents herself to plead Arthur's cause with the Planter. I am not sure but I may then surrender to Rawdon of Heckington the better half of the Fredville plantation."

Miss Corbet was beginning to disclaim such a contingency: the gathering shades of evening lending a veil to her blushes.

"But I hope you don't imagine, Tiny," resumed her companion, "that I have beguiled you out here, under Cromwell's old elm-trees, only to favour you with the family rent-roll. I want to talk to you about my morning's pains and pleasures."

"It must be an age since you visited Heckington?" she replied — to lead the way to his narrative.

"I had not seen the place these five years; not since my father's death; not since the Court of Chancery dug its teeth and claws into the property."

"And how was it looking? You had a lovely day for the expedition."

"The old hall did not charm me quite so much as when haunted by the little white mouse of a cousin, half-a-dozen years ago. But English scenery is almost *as new to me now, as when I then beheld it; and the*

park, with its fine timber and flowing stream, looked truly noble. I could have almost envied my brother, Tiny, while I stood gazing on the old oaks! — How glad I should have been, at that moment, to have had his little wife, as now, hanging on my arm!”

“And whom did you find in charge of the place? — Were they not delighted to see you?”

“No! Strangers — all strangers — put in by a Chancery Commission. A silver key, however, opened every door and gate; and I enjoyed the full advantage of being unrecognised as one of the family.”

“Does my aunt, then, never visit Heckington?”

“I should think not, by the ruinous aspect of the house. Any one interested in its preservation could not but remonstrate. I have heard from Lucretia that my mother took in dudgeon something said in an angry moment by my father, touching her family pride, — no matter what, — which determined her never to set foot in the place again.”

“How can she keep away from a spot so stored with family associations?” said Tiny, with a heavy sigh.

“Half of which will be effaced, if she do not make haste. The family pictures are already covered with mildew. Scarcely a feature is to be traced. I was forced to mount on one of the old yellow damask settees to wipe away the damp from a lovely portrait you may *recollect* of *my* mother and *yours*, as children — seated *on the ground* to divide a basket of cherries —”

"Well, well do I remember it, cousin. Grandmamma was very proud of it, as one of Gainsborough's best."

"And I, because the features of the Sophia Rawdon it commemorates, exhibit a lifelike resemblance to the little Tiny Sophia she left behind. But it was melancholy to see those two sweet loving faces obscured by dust and cobwebs; the sun never admitted to shine upon them. Still more, to reflect how thoroughly the happy children had outlived the loving generosity which taught them to divide their basket of cherries! — They would not have shared Heckington. — Rather half-a-dozen chancery-suits! —"

"And was everything in the house equally neglected?" inquired Miss Corbet, who did not like to hear blame imputed to her dead mother.

"Everything — everything! — The keys would not turn in the locks; the window-bars could scarcely be brought down. Though it is July, and the glass at seventy-five degrees, the marble flags in the hall were as wet as if pails of water had been thrown over them. The house smelt like a church, and looked like a mausoleum."

"Surely you will mention all this to Aunt Enmore? — It ought to be looked to."

"It ought to be looked to, my dear energetic little coz. But I certainly sha'n't mention it to my mother. The Elderly Party would fancy me intent upon my *interests, as heir-in-tail.*"

"To Arthur, then? — Why not write to Arthur?"

"For twenty thousand reasons, and not for twenty thousand worlds. Arthur is not sentimental. Arthur is guiltless of *Sehnsucht*. If he heard of my visit to the hall of our ancestors, the Rawdonism-of-Heckington inherent in him would explode, and he would fancy I went to spy into the nakedness of the land. Is it not disgusting, Tiny, that the golden leprosy of the century — self-interest — should have so diseased our nature, that I cannot open my heart to my own mother, or own brother, for fear of being suspected of mercenary motives! — Fie, fie, upon us all!"

"Fie upon *you*, now, Willy; for you are unwarrantably bitter! But it is getting very late. Let us turn our steps back again; and on the way, tell me a little more about Heckington. That old corner of the flower-garden, where you used to pull up the orchises I had taken the trouble of transplanting from the water meadows. Is it still a garden?"

"Covered over with a heap of rubbish! — broken bricks from the old greenhouse — demolished, lest it should find its way down. — I longed, Tiny, to inquire whether the workmen had found in the old wall the relics of your best wax-doll, which I immured there, — (do you remember?) in one of the niches, — while you stood by, sobbing and heart-broken!"

"You were always a bad boy, — a very unkind *cousin*. —"

If you speak such overplain English, burn or drown
if I give you the treasure I have brought back for
from Heckington!"

"Some old plaything! —"

"No, ungrateful girl — a new blossom, — from a
one recorded to have been planted near the old green-
house, by my poor aunt Sophia."

In saying which, he drew from under his waistcoat
beautiful Macartney Rose, gathered from a tree which
Miss Corbet well remembered to have been cherished
by the late Mrs. Rawdon, for the sake of her lost
daughter.

So many reminiscences of childhood came thronging
to her heart, revived by the sight and scent of a flower
she had never happened to see elsewhere than at Hecking-
ton, that her spirits became too much oppressed for
further conversation.

Their return to Hertford Street, through the gloaming,
was all but silent.

CHAPTER VII.

SIR JAMES ARMSTEAD, though by no means the most sensible man who has made a foolish marriage, was among the few who prove their superiority by making the best of it. Instead of sacrificing his time to the entertainment of a peevish wife confined to the sofa by the infirmities of her situation, he provided ample amusement for her by a profusion of books and newspapers, and above all, by the companionship of a cheerful, amiable female friend.

But he did more. He consulted even the interests of the cheerful friend; and, fancying Miss Corbet might be gratified by civilities offered to a near kinsman, the eve of his departure from England, left a card to William Enmore, and an invitation to dinner.

"You should take more pains to polish up your savage, my dear Tiny," said Lady Armstead, offering a crumpled note to Miss Corbet, the first time they met afterwards. "It does not suffice to trim his beard."

And by the scent of tobacco pervading the thick foreign paper on which the missive was hieroglyphed, Miss Corbet readily recognised one of the ill-gotten epistles of her cousin Willy.

"Not a word of pleasure, or honour, or regret,

any of the polite shams with which decent people garnish their refusals," added Lady Armstead. "Bruin does not so much as plead a pre-engagement; — merely says, with the most graceless condensation, that he cannot dine with us to-day."

"But why invite him? — I told your dear Amy, that Willy had made up his mind not to mix in society during his short stay in England. — He said, from the first, that it would be playing at bob-cherry with enjoyment."

"Still, he need not have expressed himself like a ploughboy."

"Certainly not, — for no one can less resemble one. My cousin is highly accomplished; — a good classic, — a perfect musician, — and speaks like a native several foreign languages."

"Not another word, Tiny," interrupted her friend, "or, in spite of his incivility, I shall bribe Policeman X, (who is parading yonder against the palisades of Park Lane,) to bring him here to dinner, per force of truncheon."

"It would not repay your pains. My poor cousin is too shy to ingratiate himself with strangers. It is only those who know him well, that recognise his merits."

And very sincerely did his cousin recognise them at that moment! — A letter even worse written and folded than his own, — though not redolent of tobacco-smoke, — *had reached her that morning* by the post; which

served to place his domestic virtues in the clearest light. He received a letter from her brother Alfred, at the Aldenham grammar-school, who could not say enough in favour of his step-cousin who had paid him a flying visit on his way to town from Heckington, the preceding day; having bestowed on him a tip unprecedented in the annals of that venerable academy.

"Young Enmore seems a stunning chap," wrote Mr. Corbet's now schoolboy-icised pupil. "He told me, dear Tiny, he had heard ever so much about me, from *you*

Little, however, had she surmised at the time she entertained her cousin with her Grenfield House teaching, — or Alfred's proficiency under her charge, or her own intense love for the brother fated to rough it through the roughest of worlds, that not a syllable of her confidences had been lost upon Willy.

Of the schoolboy's letter, she resolved to abstain from all mention to her cousin, who, from motives of delicacy or motives unexplained, had carefully kept the secret of his visit. But the moment she found herself alone with him in the breakfast-room, her usual frankness prevailed. Out started her hands, — down rolled her grateful tears. — But "Oh! Willy, how kind, how very kind of you!" was the only eloquence at her disposal.

"Not another word. — I beg of you, dear Tiny, not another word!" he whispered, in reply; and as *there was* at that moment rustling into the room *as usual* about the key of the tea-chest, and

abundant supply of dry toast, he was probably afraid of provoking her jealous comments.

It was not very wonderful that, with her heart thus softened, Miss Corbet should listen impatiently to the sarcastic remarks of her friend Amy. It was not very wonderful that she found the discussion of Debates and Divisions between Sir James and his official Dittos, that day, unusually tedious. There seemed more life in the little finger of Willy Enmore, and more warmth in his heart, than in the half-dozen wheels of the heavy machine of the state, which were revolving around her. She had scarcely patience when Barton Frere puckered up his parchment cheek into a smile, while attempting to banter her concerning her *tête-à-tête* with the mysterious stranger. His stereotyped jokes, — part of every old bachelor's repertory of facetiæ, — concerning impending favours and wedding cake, instead of provoking a flippant retort, as they would have done from Florence or Carry Horsford, produced no other reply than an indignant blush.

"If William the Conqueror had condescended to dine here to-day," observed Lady Armstead, when she and her little friend were alone together in the drawing-room after dinner, "he would have heard news of his brother. For as little love as is lost between them, perhaps he might have cared to learn how narrow has been his own escape of becoming Rawdon of Heckington!"

"Has Arthur, then, been ill?"

"*In the greatest danger; — but from an accident.*

I had a letter this morning from Bob. Probably, however, Mrs. Enmore knows all about it."

"If so, she has said nothing to us."

"Us, Tiny? — *Already?*" —

"I mean to my cousin and myself. My aunt, always reserved, seems very little disposed to talk about her absent son. But will you not tell me your news, Ann, that I may repeat it to Willy?" —

"You shall read my brother's letter," said Lady Arinstead, carelessly taking it from the drawer of her writing-table. And not without emotion did Miss Corbet commence the perusal of a long epistle, dated from Intelaken, which, in spite of the slang and chaff which rendered it almost unintelligible to a home-reared girl, excited her heartfelt interest.

In an expedition recently attempted by Arthur Enmore and his college chum, among the adjoining mountains, in which they had rashly dispensed with a guide, Arthur Enmore, it appeared, had met with a terrible fall. His own near-sightedness, or the slipperiness of the grass, had hurried him to the edge of a precipice, and young Horsford, in describing his horror at witnessing the sudden disappearance of his friend, wrote with such bewildered earnestness, as to be somewhat difficult of comprehension.

"As well as I could manage, by grasping the low grass and bushes on the hillside," he wrote, — "with my heart sick, my breath choking, and my head dizzy

endeavoured to look over the brink, my dear Amy, and certain the worst. But not a trace of the poor fellow as visible! Masses of stunted pine-trees concealed the use of the overhanging rock from which he fell; and all twenty minutes elapsed before, in a drizzling rain, was able to wind my way to the fatal spot: where, in the edge of my consternation, I beheld only a huddled heap of clothes! — It seemed all U. P. with Rawdon of Heckington! —

“I had scarcely strength to turn him on his back and ascertain the worst. I expected to find him smashed, angled, unrecognisable. However, by God’s blessing, he had fallen on thick grass and soft underwood; and was insensible only from the shock. No broken bones, — only a frightful concussion. I promise you, however, that it was a trying moment when, after pouring no end

Kirsch down his throat from the pocket-pistol with which we were luckily provided, I saw him slowly unclose his eyes. I had still to learn whether he had sustained any mortal injury; and I don’t know that I was ever better pleased than when, after striking out his legs and arms as if swimming the lake instead of underling like a trout on the grass, poor Arthur gradually picked himself up, and sang out, ‘All right, old fellow!’ — like a good ‘un!

“It wasn’t all right, however; as the doctors found, at his cost, when, with the help of a couple of foresters whom I luckily found working half a mile from the

spot, I got him placed on a hurdle, and carried at a snail's pace, to the hotel. For the first two days they declared that the spine was injured, and ordered the unlucky patient to lie motionless on the sofa: but he might have been extended till now, had he followed their stupid injunctions. But Atty's natural restlessness stood his friend. On the third day, he must needs get up and stirring; when lo! the injured spine turned out to be nothing worse than a muscular sprain. Except an awkward limp, he is now beginning to walk about his room like other people; only that having been so copiously bled — bled like a calf — he remains as pale as a rat. When I thought him in danger, I asked leave to notify his disaster to his brother and sister, and if you had only seen him flare up at the proposal — I must beg you, therefore, to say nothing of this to the old lady in Hertford Street, who might take it to her head to write to Willy at Dresden; and *that* you must never do! — If *he* were to come here, his brother, so strong and disabled as he is, would rush out straight into the lake. Atty will not hear his name mentioned."

A few rambling family messages to Cleveland were included in the letter; which, from first to last, served to wound the sensitive feelings of Miss Corbet.

"Strange people to live amongst, these English!," observed Lady Armstead, on noticing her air of contentment.

But Tiny was just then puzzling herself what *were not* her duty to communicate to her cousin.

she had learned from her friend; for to *her*, Arthur's prohibitions, or Bob Horsford's injunctions, were nothing.

Fagged and out of spirits, it was a relief to be informed by Harding, on her return home, that his lady had retired for the night. She made her way, however, to the drawing-room, to place in a vase standing on the table, some rare exotics given her by Lady Armstead, which had been sent up that morning from Higham Grange; beautiful, but far less precious than the Heckington rose she had carefully laid aside to dry! — Of finding Willy established there, she entertained no apprehension; for at that hour, he was always at his Club. Yet *there* he was, extended on the sofa, apparently asleep; and she was about to steal from the room, and leave him to his slumbers, when he suddenly started up.

"I thought you were never coming back!" he exclaimed, contemplating with admiring eyes her airy white muslin dress and richly braided hair. — "How pretty you look, Tiny! — fresh as a flower! All dinner-time, I was taking shame to myself for my excuses to those people in Park Lane. — To think that, but for my own sullen obstinacy, I might have spent several additional hours in your company!"

"And *why* did you excuse yourself?" said she, not sitting down, but still holding her candle in one hand and her flowers in the other.

"Because *I detest the whole hen-coop of Horsfords!* — *Bob is my sworn enemy, as I am his.*"

"He may be no friend of yours, Willy; — but he is a very attached one of your brother."

"Only because he wants him for a brother-in-law. The Horsfords are patent impostors."

"I cannot help hoping that you are over-severe," said Miss Corbet.

And without further hesitation, she related to him the story of Arthur's accident, and the intense anxiety of his friend.

Even Lady Armstead, had she been present, would have found no fault with the degree of sensibility evinced by Willy Enmore throughout the narrative. Though he abstained from interrupting his cousin by a single inquiry or exclamation, the tears brimming in his eyes, the colour fluctuating in his cheeks, demonstrated his heartfelt interest in her story; and when, at the close, she repeated Bob Horsford's hopes that the "dear old fellow would soon be on his pins again," Willy fetched a deep breath, as though relieved from an intolerable burthen.

The certainty of his brother's safety was not, however, more gratifying to *him*, than was to his cousin the sight of his emotion.

Why was he always endeavouring to smother every natural feeling, every humane sentiment? Was it, indeed, as he asserted, because sordid interest had been rendered by his parents the predominating influence of life? — Had he been taught to despise sensibility as

weakness, in a home, which, human love being banished, scarcely deserved the name? .

"Dearest Tiny," said he, at length taking her hand, for, absorbed by the details of his story, she had unconsciously deposited on the table her light and flowers, — "how much am I indebted to you for disregarding Arthur's injunction! — How truly do I thank you for confiding to me all this!"

"But surely," remonstrated Miss Corbet, — and at that moment, unseen by either, a third person entered the room of which the door was standing a-jar, — "surely we ought to confide it to my aunt? She will never forgive us for keeping her so completely in the dark."

"Not for worlds!" exclaimed Willy, imprinting a kiss on the hand he was grasping, — "I must act first, and enlighten her afterwards. I will never forgive you, Tiny, if, till I sanction it, you afford the slightest warning to my mother."

Apprised by Miss Corbet's sudden start and rapid paleness that something was amiss, the agitated Willy, turning towards the door, at which poor Tiny was glancing, descried his mother standing in her night-dress on the threshold.

Now if no man be a hero to his *valet-de-chambre*, no woman short of Mrs. Siddons in *Lady Macbeth*, ever looked august in a *bedgown*. — Mrs. Enmore least of all: for the removal of her capillary attractions reducing

her to her "just integrity," she acquired, with her wide-frilled nightcap, full twenty years of age.

It was fortunate, therefore, that, whether or not she intended to play the spy on her son and niece, she at least did not aspire to a tragic dénouement of the domestic drama. Scenes were out of Mrs. Enmore's line; and open combat was foreign to her system.

"I felt alarmed at hearing voices in the drawing-room, having left Willy asleep, and not knowing you were returned," said she, calmly addressing her niece. "I thought it best to make sure that Harding, who gets drowsy from our present late hours, had put out the lights. How did you find Lady Armstead to-day?"

"Not very well. But she roused herself to entertain her company, and was quite cheerful before I left," said Miss Corbet, greatly confused by the custody of a family-secret to be concealed from her aunt.

"You must go and see her again to-morrow, then," said Mrs. Enmore, with self-command undiminished by her maternal discoveries. "And now, my dear, as it has struck twelve, let us ring the bell, and release poor Harding from further attendance."

"Good night, mother! — Good night, dear, dear Tiny!" said Willy, again pressing his lips to the hand he had not relinquished.

And his cousin, aware of the painful feelings just

then struggling in his bosom, attributed his unusual fervour to his recent shock.

In the silence of her own chamber, she sat ruminating on all that had passed; on the escape of Arthur Rawdon, and the sudden betrayal of fraternal tenderness on the part of his brother; and, thus occupied, a brief night of July glided imperceptibly away. Morning peeped into the chamber before she retired to rest.

Wearied in heart and soul, she fell heavily asleep; — little surmising that in the interim her aunt was planning a plausible letter to be written on the morrow, requesting Mr. Corbet to “fetch home his dear Sophia to Grenfield House; as the languid looks of her niece were beginning to betray the ill-effects of a prolonged sojourn in London. She did not wish to alarm him. But the sooner he removed her to a purer atmosphere, the better.”

Like most manœuvrers, the prudent mother rejoiced by anticipation in the success of her projects. The young couple still doubtful how much of their conversation the preceding night she had overheard, would be startled as by a *coup d'état* by Mr. Corbet's arrival; more particularly, as she intended to warn her simple-hearted brother-in-law against all mention of her letter. — “It might be injurious to poor Tiny if she discovered that her friends were uneasy about her health.”

The Elderly Party made no extraordinary haste in rising or dressing, with the view of circumventing

further *tête-à-têtes* between the young couple. It sufficed that her iron grasp was upon them.

"Is Miss Corbet down?" she inquired of her prim maid, Parkins, as she fastened the last hook of her dress.

"No, mem, — nor stirring, that I can hear; which is the more curious, considering her early habits, when she first came to this house."

"We were all later than usual, last night, Parkins."

"So I find, mem. I was amazed to hear you go back to the drawing-room long after I had left you, undressed. I was even thinking of stepping down myself, mem, to give you a shawl."

"It was a very close night. No chance of my taking cold."

"Then, perhaps, it *was* best, mem, to sit late, and take leave of Mr. William, over night, sooner than be roused up at such a pleposterous hour in the morning. Harding was forced to go to bed again, — after Mr. Willy was gone, mem; — quite knocked up, by having to carry down them heavy boxes!"

"What heavy boxes?" — inquired Mrs. Enmore, aghast.

"Why, certainly perhaps, mem, not the *heaviest*. Probably Mr. William did not wish to have you and Miss Corbet disturbed at six o'clock in the morning by the hurry-skurry of porters on the stairs. The mail-trunks are left corded and directed upstairs, to go by *the afternoon goods-train*."

Mrs. Enmore was by this time even more astounded than she had been by her over-hearings, in the drawing-room, the preceding night. But, ever on her guard, she took care not to betray to her prying attendant, how thoroughly she was taken by surprise.

"At what hour did he go?" she said, composedly extending her muslin sleeve to be buttoned.

"At twenty minutes past six, mem. I looked at my watch when I heard the cab rattle off; which not being able to account for, I thought somethen must be amiss. For though others may have known all about it, *I* wasn't no-wise apprised of Mr. William's departure; no more wasn't Harding."

Had Mrs. Enmore received intelligence of her son's elopement with his cousin, she could scarcely have felt more overcome. Though predetermined that the young people should not abide many days longer under the same roof, she wished their separation to be an act and deed of her own; not the result of a fit of petulance on the part of either. The tendency of this sudden act of wilfulness, who could guess? — Its motive, it was difficult not to attribute to an avowal he had extorted from her, at dinner the preceding day, when she endeavoured, by remote hints, to persuade him that a steam-voyage to Jamaica, in the dog-days, would be almost as pleasant as yachting. On his laughingly demurring to such an opinion, *she had foolishly added* —

"At all events, it would be better than a summer in

town. Even Arthur, in his last letter, expressed his wonder that you, who have always affected to hate and despise a London life, should be dawdling out the seasons in Hertford Street."

"But how does he *know* that I am dawdling in Hertford Street?" was his rejoinder. "We have not corresponded these two years. Have you been complaining to him, mother, of the length of my visit?"

"Your brother doubtless heard of it from the Horsfords. I never mention your name to him. It would only produce dissension between us."

No sooner had the words escaped her lips than she would have given worlds to recall them. When she saw the flame that glared in the eyes of her son, as he repeated, accompanied by the most opprobrious epithets, the name of the Horsfords, she was thankful that hundreds of leagues of sea and land intervened between her unbrotherly offspring.

And now, she was fain to attribute his abrupt departure to her own rash hint, and Willy's resentment of his brother's enmity! But her first object was to put a good face upon the matter with her niece.

Refreshed by sleep after her careworn night, Tiny soon made her appearance in the cheerful breakfast-room, into which the summer sun was shining pleasantly. Her quick eye instantly noted that the table was laid for two; that no chair, no cup-and-saucer, were set for "Mr. William."

"Does not Willy breakfast at home this morning?" said she, anxiously; for after a wrangle with his mother, he often breakfasted at the Travellers', or at Verey's.

"Surely he took leave of you last night?" said Mrs. Enmore, intently watching her. "Are you not aware that my son is off for Jamaica?"

"Impossible, dear aunt; — impossible — impossible!" cried Miss Corbet, as pale as death.

"His luggage is to follow him, this afternoon. See! — The van of the South-Western railway is at the door, to convey it to Waterloo station."

Tiny flew to the window, to verify the assertion. In another moment, she was in the hall. Yes! one of the boxes already brought down was standing there, addressed to —

"WILLIAM ENMORE, Esq., Passenger,

"W. I. Mail Office,

"Southampton Docks."

"You seem astounded, my dear?" observed Mrs. Enmore, as her niece staggered back into the room, and threw herself into a chair.

"Say, rather, *grieved!*" was the frank reply. "That he should have gone without a word! — That he should have left England at such a time!"

And she seemed so near fainting, that Mrs. Enmore, *almost touched by her distress*, poured out a glass of

iced water, which, in compliment to Willy's predilection, stood on the side-table.

An unwonted gleam of sympathy in her kee had all but betrayed her niece into a full avowal of especial motives for deploring the precipitate flight of Arthur's only brother. She could scarcely refrain from owning how fervently she had hoped that the death and escape from death of the elder, would have moved the heart of the younger to seek a full and affectionate reconciliation; that he would overlook Rawdon of Heckington in the Interlaken invalid.

But her pledge to Lady Armstead sealed her lips, and the confusion with which she checked herself, uttering — "He *ought* not to have gone. — It was wrong — very cruel — very wicked. He half promised that —" Then, instead of concluding her sentence, she covered her face with her hands and wept bitterly, which served only to confirm the false impressions of her Enmore.

Accustomed to repress her own emotions, she regarded hysterical tears with the same terror and annoyance that others contemplate a fire; and the never efficacious in her own case to secure self-control was the only one that suggested itself on the occasion to restore Miss Corbet to composure. She summoned the servants, as witnesses. She rang for Eliza to bring the urn. She sent for Parkins to bring

keys. If *their* presence did not compel her niece to self-government, she was incorrigible.

But Harding was slow in making his appearance; being occupied in endeavouring to repel the entrance of Lucretia Rawdon, who, ere the street-door was closed after the driving off of the railway-van, had forced her way into the hall, and was inexorable to the plea of — “not at home.”

“I don’t want to see my cousin Jane, — I don’t want to see Sophia Corbet,” she said, furling her ample parasol with a manifest resolve to make her way in. “But I *must* and will see Mr. Willy. I have particular business with him.”

Harassed out of all forbearance by his crosses and cares of the morning, the “pampered menial” gruffly informed her that, unless her business could be transacted by letter, she would have to await his return from Jamaica. But on this hint, she became clamorous to see “Cousin Jane,” or even the contemned Tiny. — She was not to be denied.

Preferring even this unpalatable intervention to a *tête-à-tête* with her niece, Mrs. Enmore came forward to sanction the admittance of the angry spinster.

“It is true, then?” cried she, when, after shaking hands stiffly with the mistress of the house, she discerned traces of tears on the eyelashes of her younger cousin. — “He’s *really* gone? — Not one of those *pecious shams* with which the servants here are always

so ready? — Sailed for the West Indies, eh? — Frol never to return! — The yellow fever is raging in Sp Town! — The cholera is at its worst throughout island! — Jane, Jane! why don't you answer? — don't you speak? — Who ever thought you would out such an unnatural mother! — You've driven poor lad out of house and home, to die like a amongst strangers!"

"Since you are so much interested 'in our fi affairs," rejoined Mrs. Enmore, in a low, husky "you cannot but be aware that Willy arrived from Germany only on his way to visit the Fre Estate."

"I know what *brought* him to England. But you and I are perfectly aware what *kept* him. Don't leave the room, Tiny. I have nothing to sa what you ought to hear. When Willy was with m day before yesterday, he told me distinctly th should remain in London another month, unless (i wasn't unlikely,) his mother worried him away. you *have* worried him, Jane. He's gone; and repent it to the longest day you have to live."

In the intensity of her irritation, the enraged sp totally disregarded the presence of Harding, wh now storing his mind with the why and because c *family commotion*, by pretending to effect a dex *coalition between the teapot and the tea-urn*.

"It is no fault of mine," Mrs. Enmore observed, vaguely hoping still to deceive somebody, "that my son did not think it necessary to apprise you of his intended departure. He may have had motives of his own for the concealment."

"Nonsense! — there is neither motive nor concealment in his nature. Willy is all impulse. Don't judge him by yourself. Tiny, give me a glass of that cold water — I feel as if I was choking."

Cousin Jane was, perhaps, less desirous than she ought to have been that the sensation might prove deceptive. But the Cassandra of the Rawdon dynasty soon recovered sufficient breath to renew her denunciations.

"I emphatically declare, and would swear it on oath," cried she, "that, two days ago, when Willy returned from Heckington —"

"From *Heckington*?"

"He had no more thoughts of leaving England for weeks to come, than I have of starting for Constantinople! Do you think he would have commissioned me to wait upon his grandfather's executors, or trustees, or whatever those rogues of lawyers in Took's Court choose to call themselves, and let him know the result of my interview, if he hadn't intended to be on the spot and hear what I might have to communicate?"

"You are, *as usual*, indulging in strange delusions," said Mrs. Enmore. "My son Willy has not visited

Heckington for years. What should he do there? What are the trustees to *him*?"

"It is because they are nothing, that he chose *me* confer with them. But since you have no faith in word, ask Tiny there, how long it is since her cou was 'at Heckington."

"I shall ask no one," rejoined the "Elderly Part perceiving, by a furtive glance at her niece's heightened complexion, that she was prepared to second the assertions of Lucretia. "Whatever my son wished me know of his movements or affairs, he personally communicated. Anything he preferred confiding to other people, was doubtless less qualified to meet a mother's ear."

"No such thing!" persisted Lucretia, not to be silenced by plausible flourish. "Willy did not acquiesce you with his visit to his family seat, because your suspicious nature would have been fishing out motives for what was a natural instinct. All he desired to learn from the trustees was, whether, since they did not choose to incur the expense of airing the house, keeping it weather-tight, he might be permitted to contribute a sufficient sum, annually, to secure the preservation of the pictures."

"Very provident, certainly. It is not every heir who would take such thought for an inheritance *little likely* to come into his possession."

"You wrong him — you wrong him! *Bord*"

ulations had no share in my cousin's anxiety about the ruinous state of Heckington," cried Miss Corbet, breaking silence for the first time since the entrance of Lucretia. 'I, dear Aunt, am not the heir-in-tail, — *I* have no claims on Heckington. But it grieved me almost as much as it did him, to find the only existing portraits of our two mothers, disfigured by a coat of mildew.'

Was the crimson flush that overspread the sallow face of Mrs. Enmore, as she listened to this protest, produced by learning the degradation of a picture formerly so prized [by her parents; or by the confirmation thus afforded, that a secret understanding existed between her son and niece?

At all events, she had too much on her hands at present, in parrying the attacks and abridging the visit of her unwelcome guest, to elucidate the question.

Tiny must bide her time! —

CHAPTER VIII.

SQUIRE HORSFORD of Cleveland, though, for twenty years, he had enjoyed in his county the consequence and comfort attendant on a fine estate, was beginning to be reminded by a certain perennial thinness at the elbows, of his coat and toes of his boots, that what was wealth for a newly-married couple, may be rendered poverty by the overgrowth of an expensive family. He was one of the many whose place the rapid march of luxury, in England, is rendering untenable.

With a wife and daughters intent upon vying in finery and fashion with ladyships six times greater and richer than themselves, — with a fast son at Oxford, another in the Crimea, and a wild Etonian rising fifteen, it was difficult to make both ends of his income meet; and impossible to renovate the furniture of Cleveland, which was growing shabby, or prevent the gardens and greenhouses from looking weedy and sere.

The too easy master of the family had been long persuaded by his wife that an annual visit to London was indispensable for the interests of his daughters; and the brilliant marriage of their pretty Amy afforded an *lucky support* to her system. It was, however, a *great disappointment* to find that Lady Armstead's chapel

of her sisters was not to enable them to dispense with their usual season in town; and that his hopefuls were not likely to appropriate to themselves, as they had expected, the excellent stud and capital preserves of their new brother-in-law. The grave, well-bred Sir James Armstead, who took no liberties, was not a man with whom liberties could be taken.

Having courteously declined the invitation of the Horsfords to visit Cleveland with his dear Amy at the close of the Session, on the plea of long-standing engagements at home, he expressed a hope of seeing *them* in Somersetshire later in the year; — adding something about the excellence of the cock-shooting at Higham Grange, which purported to render the “later” as late as possible.

The Squire was satisfied; for Mr. Horsford, under the pressure of family cares, and an inveterate gout, had shuffled on to a time of life when even a sporting man is content to take sportsmanship easy; handling his rod, gun, or hunting-whip, as tamely as he would his umbrella, to lounge over his own property, rather than go further and fare better. Unceasingly taxed by the extravagance of his scattered offspring, it was lucky that the narrowness of his mind rendered him insensible to the gradual decay of his body and estate. He continued to keep his game-lists and hunting-journal, with all their vicissitudes of weather, stud, and kennels, with exemplary *punctuality*. *The Reform of the House of Com-*

mons he left to Sir James Armstead; the reform as private bills of his own house, to the mismanagement his wife.

The fine trout-stream that fertilised the meadows Clevelands, luckily afforded the poor squire a pretext for seeing as little as possible of the ready-furnished house in town into which his family was cramped, while the mayfly was on the water; and on their return home languid and discontented, at the close of the season, the prospect of becoming a grandpapa announced to him and his wife, fully accounted for the anxiety evinced by Sir James Armstead that for the present their pretty Anne should lead a quiet life. About December, when he hoped to "have a shy at the Somersetshire woodcock" he trusted to find a little son-and-heir flourishing at Higham Grange.

It was consequently rather startling to Mr. Horsford when, one fine day in September, in crossing the high road on the outskirts of his property in pursuit of a covey of partridges, and to the impediment of a rough pony, with Henry Corbet on its back, he was forced to stand and deliver his stock of neighbourly news; as he found that, while his daughters were grumbling in the shrubberies of Clevelands, the pretty bridesmaid of Grexfield House was enjoying with the Armsteads the bracing air of Higham Downs.

"I had promised my sister-in-law that Tiny should accompany her to the sea-side before she returned home

said Mr. Corbet, in answer to the civil inquiries after his daughter of his brother sportsman; "for Mrs. Enmore usually spends the fall of the year at Broad-stairs, or East Bourne, or some other bathing-place. But when it came to the start, Sir James and Lady Armstead, who had shown no end of kindness to my girl all the season long, were so urgent that she should give them her company for a month or two, that her aunt was prevailed upon to give her up. But all this can be no news to you," added Mr. Corbet, "so I needn't keep you pottering here, balking Ponto and Don in their scent."

The truth was, that both to aunt and niece the pressing invitation of the Armsteads afforded a very acceptable alternative. In their present relative position, they were far from happy together; and Parkins and Larding, who were in the habit of refreshing themselves with the annual enjoyment of complete donothingness in seaside lodgings, did their utmost to forward a scheme that relieved them from additional trouble. Tiny herself, aware that she was not expected at home before Christmas, was not sorry to enjoy the interim in an atmosphere somewhat less torpid than the unhomeish home of her aunt. It was too full of reminiscences, too full of Willy; the cousin who had quitted her as he would have flung off some garment of which he was weary; marking his contempt of her opinions and prayers by quitting Europe at the moment when his only brother lay *in peril of death*. How could she continue to care

for one who cared so little for herself? — How could she continue to care for one who betrayed such unchristianly hardness of heart? — To quit the spot which reproduced him every moment before her eyes, was indeed a relief!

Right happy would she have been, if, at the moment of bidding her farewell, she could have fancied that the only sister of her lost mother experienced the smallest regret at her departure. But Mrs. Enmore's heart was embittered against her, as in some degree the origin of renewed family discord. It was something, moreover, to be relieved from the presence of a person with whom she was continually playing a part.

Nor were her feelings mollified towards her niece, when, some days after she had quitted town with the Armsteads, a newspaper reached Hertford Street, per post, addressed in the well-known handwriting of Lucretia Rawdon; which contained, under the head of "Interlaken," a full but somewhat exaggerated account of the accident which had befallen her son. That he was safe, — preserved, as by a miracle, from destruction, — did not half so much elicit her gratitude to Heaven, as her conviction that, through her intimacy with the Hornford family, Tiny had been from the first apprised of the event which she had carefully preserved from her knowledge provoked her anger. Nothing so irritating to a cunning person as to be over-reached.

The poor girl whose life had been of late encircled

by a hedge of thorns, was enjoying meanwhile the full advantage of living among people unprivileged by affinity of blood to tyrannise over her thoughts and feelings. The good nature of Amy, now subdued by indisposition, and the well-bred intelligence of her husband, rendered them truly acceptable companions after the narrow-minded despotism of Mrs. Enmore.

It surprised her, however, a little, after hearing Sir James enlarge so feelingly on the advantage his poor wife would derive from the cheerful society of an old friend, to find on their arrival at Higham Grange, that a succession of company was expected. So far from the "poor wife" having a solitary dressing-room to apprehend, the utmost sacrifice required of Tiny in her behalf, was to share the pleasant task of entertaining the neighbourhood, and welcoming the *habitués* of Park Lane.

Higham Grange was a respectable old family-seat, built by an opulent ancestor, and untortured out of its original symmetry by modern improvements. The structure was Jacobean — the gardens accordant — the avenue singularly fine; the whole establishment on a nobler scale than any with which Tiny had been hitherto familiar. The Armstead baronetcy was one of the oldest of that much-abused Order of semi-nobility; and its present representative had enlisted in official life from no covetousness of either salary or a coronet; but because, *having greatly distinguished himself at the Uni-*

versity, he was hailed as a predestined premier, both his family and the groundlings.

Nine arrows in ten fall short of the mark; and one Hamlet, there arise scores of Laerteses. But James Armstead, though neither a Burleigh nor a Chatham turned out an excellent Under-Secretary. While contemporaries devoted their energies to suppressing the fox, or encouraging the pheasant, he was working the country by repressing tickets of leave, and hatching Colonies and Reformatories. Let us hope that he was working for conscience sake! At all events, he had attained the first station on his road to a peerage.

In the case of most officials, it is the pavement of Downing Street, or floor of the House of Commons, that entitles a placeman to say "my foot is on my native heath, and my name is Macgregor." But Armstead, Baronet, was never so much himself as when his boot was on the pavement of his noble hall at Higham, and his eye on his own name imprinted upon hundreds of carts and agricultural-machines, contributing to the cultivation of the mother-earth wherewith his own clay was congenial; — the earth whose business it was to produce harvests of heavy wheat, early peas, and French pot-herbs, for his behoof. His pretty Amy had not abided eight-and-forty hours under the roof of Higham Grange before she fancied that her wedded lord was a different man from the M.P. of the London session. Stewart

bailiffs, head-gardeners, and all the paraphernalia of landed proprietorship, had added a cubit to his stature.

In Park Lane, in spite of a few bickerings and occasional resentments, she had loved him as an indulgent husband, a little too old for her. But now, as he paced the stately terraces of Higham Grange, she looked up to him as one who, if arrayed in the starched ruff and velvet doublet of Raleigh's time, entitled to the axe and block of despotic sovereignty, would have done honour to his caste. She wondered only how he had ever leaped from his granite and Caen stone, to the stuccoed insignificance of Clevelands! Even the venerable servants of the house commanded her consideration; and there was a silver-haired head-keeper of stalwart proportions, whose stately salutation it was difficult not to acknowledge in kind.

But if the impressions received by Lady Armstead were of a favourable sort, those she created were fully as advantageous. On her first inauguration into bureaucratic life, in Park Lane, the polished man of the world was occasionally a little shocked at the Horsford levity still inherent in his wife. But all flippancy was now subdued in the delicate-looking invalid, enveloped in muslin and mechlin, so happy in his society and the old companionship of Tiny Corbet; and who was shortly to crown the ancient honours of Higham Grange, by a direct heir to its line.

Sir James had been scarcely aware how much this

was an object to him. He had never surmised how much more beauty he should discover in the sweet p face that smiled beside his library fire, than in the brilliant Amy of the London ball-room, or Cleveland's law meet.

He had, indeed, to thank his own foresight having estranged her from the influence of the flirt sisters and deceitful mother, who had promoted the union of the beauty of the family with a man twenty years older than herself, only that she might shine as a London belle; wearing finer dresses and giving more fêtes, than she could have otherwise pretended to. But he also knew that, in conquering the new wife whom his second marriage, as it were, had made his own, he was not a little indebted to the gentle, kindly, unassuming companion he had urged upon her friendship.

How much the calm dignity of Higham Grange had assisted in matronising his lady, he little suspected. Nay, he might perhaps have felt mortified that the woman in whom his personal reputation, parliamentary standing and inherited rank, had excited so little respect, should have been so much impressed by the train of mountain tenants that arrived to welcome them on the verge of his domain; — by the deferential deportment of his fashionable household, — and by the dignified family gallery of which Holbein had laid the foundation. It was certainly not to *these* he wished to be indebted for *her first consciousness* of his importance. — It was

to the flashy vulgarity of her antecedents he cared to owe her new-found sense of his dignity. It was not the simpering faces of the one generation of Horsfords which preceded her father, — the son of a stockbroker whose father was a myth, — that ought to have imparted a charm to his own long-bodied great grandmothers.

A man so wise in his generation ought, however, to have been thankful to local influence and the grand old avenues of Higham Grange for having accomplished what his personal merit had failed to effect.



CHAPTER IX.

"NEXT week, my dear Amy, when the arrive," said Sir James, one morning to his wife, "we were making the tour of the orangerie into winter, — well-fruited old trees had just been removed for winter, — "we must invite a few of our friends. My sister will expect it; and it will be a relief to Corbet. You and I are beginning to count on it. To be added, fondly pressing her arm, — "and a young girl will be tired of a continual *tête-à-tête*." —

"How little you know her. The library and the garden are sufficient company for Tiny. She has a quiet, sober, lonely life, that the perpetual excitement which Flo. and Carry cannot exist, only serve to weary and fatigue Tiny."

"Lucky girl, — or rather lucky man who marries her for a wife! — I wish she would take a friend Frere, who is more than three parts in her."

"A FANCY, to that horrid old Barton Frere?"

"Did you not promise me, traitress, that *never again* apply the epithet 'old' to my friends and contemporaries?"

"But Barton Frere is *not* your contemporary. I am convinced he was born bald and tiresome."

"As my head of hair is at present unimpeachable, I can afford to let you use the words bald and tiresome as synonymous. I can assure you, however, that Frere would make an admirable husband, and place his wife in an excellent position."

"I don't believe Tiny cares about position. Only she *must* love the people she lives with. She was perfectly contented in her poky old home; because she dearly loved her father and mother and little brothers."

"There are hopes then, that she did *not* love her handsome cousin in Hertford Street; as she seems to have been overjoyed to escape from thence."

"One can't tell. She never talks about him, — though often about her little schoolboy-pupil."

"That looks ugly! —" Sir James was on the point of adding. But he refrained; certain that every word he uttered respecting Miss Corbet would, in the course of the day, be repeated to her by his wife.

When Lord and Lady Brookdale arrived, so far from feeling their coming to be a relief, Miss Corbet deeply regretted the quiet little family trio where she was almost as much at home as in the Grenfield parlour. Amy had become so mild and sisterly; — Sir James was so agreeable a companion, — so even-tempered and so full of *anecdote*! — That he was indebted for her *high appreciation of his elocution to the skill with which*

he frequently led the conversation to the state and prospects of the West Indian Colonies; the influence of Abolition and the value of Slave-grown Sugars would have been loth to admit.

The Brookdales, however, though an intermixture were inoffensive, well-bred people — pumiced to the superficial polish of a conventional life; this feeling, as well as talking, in a whisper; — “shocked” and “distressed” at hearing of things that would scarcely have disturbed the serenity of a fly; and believing the country to be in danger whenever a few score of malcontents assembled in some obscure borough to cast a vote of censure upon government.

Even the little girl of ten years old, “sole daughter of their house and heart,” whom they brought with them, — not, however, unguarded by a patent governess or unprovided with a bale of schoolbooks, — a model of precocious propriety. — When her father glanced at her across the room, the poor child instinctively drew up, as if at drill; and when asked by Uncle Heckington whether she had been out walking that morning she replied in a tremulous voice, (as instructed,) that she had accompanied Miss Strickney on the Terrace for a slight relaxation.”

The over-educated child, who though endowed with nature with beautiful features, looked pale and thin, wore round her neck a locket engraved with a crest and initials, bestowed on her by a royal godmother

virtue of which, she had been devoted to prospective courtiership, as Catholic children, in their cradles, are often *voué au blanc*, or dedicated to the service of the Virgin.

In addition to the Brookdales, a large party arrived the following day. But why indulge in the platitude of describing a large party in a country-house? — Are not all country neighbourhoods alike? — Are not all country-houses alike? — The same preliminary perambulation through the guest-rooms of the stately house-keeper, to see that the linen is well-aired and the fires blazing; the same ringing of bells and coughing of post-horses just as day is dusk and the curtains are drawn; the same procession up the back-stairs of grumbling footmen bearing imperials, and grumbling ladies' maids, dressing-cases, and lapdogs; the same laborious conversation round the drawing-room fire, concerning the state of the roads and prospects of the weather, — everywhere suffice to prove that a score of reluctant human beings have abandoned their comfortable firesides, for the cold-catching duty of eating the dinner and shooting the pheasants of some neighbour from whom they expect a similar sacrifice in return.

On the present occasion, all were glad to come. For there was a bride and a new *ménage* to be criticised; and many who were angry that Sir James Armstead, after waiting so long, had selected a wife having nothing but a *pretty face* to recommend her, hoped to find their

ill-nature justified by her incompetency to do the honour of such a house as Higham Grange.

But above all, they rejoiced in the opportunity of meeting the Brookdales. During her brother's bachelorhood, Lady Brookdale had never visited the Grange; and the position of her lord in the Royal Household imparted immense consequence, in the eyes of her early neighbours, to an utterly insignificant woman. Though in reality as devoid of influence at Windsor Castle as one of the Knights in its Almshouses, she was as reverentially addressed as if Lord Brookdale had Stars, Garter and Mitres at his disposal, to shower down upon her acquaintance.

To poor Tiny, on the other hand, the Somersetshire worthies paid not the smallest attention. So simply dressed, so simply mannered, so anxious to diminish the hostess's fatigues of her friend Amy, by showing the younger ladies to their rooms, taking care that the elder ones were inducted into the softest-cushioned chairs and sofas — she passed at first for one of Lady Armistead's sisters; and, on being introduced as "Miss Corbett" instead of "Miss Horsford," was set down as a poor relation.

Even Lady Brookdale, who had once or twice found her sitting with her sister-in-law in London, on her sick days or rainy days, had come in the first instance to the same conclusion; and after noticing the good-natured *zeal* with which she took care, on their arrival, that Mi

Strickney and her pupil's tea should be attended to, took an early opportunity to inquire of her brother whether Miss Corbet was permanently engaged as Lady Armstead's companion.

"*Engaged?*" said he, inexpressibly amused. "Surely, my dear Maria, you remember Mr. and Mrs. Rawdon of Heckington, with whom my father and mother used to exchange country visitations a hundred years ago? Our young friend is the only child of their eldest daughter; and had she been *Master* Corbet instead of *Miss*, would have inherited their property, which her mother enjoyed only for her life."

"A fine old place, Hekington. I recollect the gray carp there, coming to be fed," observed Lady Brookdale, (a thin-faced, high-nosed woman, whose sharp physiognomy was like a bad translation of the dignified Roman face of her brother) — "and the peacocks on the balustrades of the terraces."

"Mrs. Rawdon, by whom her granddaughter was brought up, left her a small fortune. But the father, a Clevelands neighbour, is married again, to a confirmed invalid; and my wife, who is very fond of Miss Corbet, is glad to afford her a little change of scene."

Poor Tiny would have been amused had she known to what she was indebted for Lady Brookdale's sudden thawing from her uncivil frigidity. But by the awe-stricken manner in which she heard the word "*Windsor*" whispered behind fans by the ladies gathered after

dinner round the hearthrug, and knowing nothing by her own experience of courts or courtiers, she concluded that caprice might be "the badge of all their tribe."

The profound deference with which her ladyship was accosted by the Somersetshire neighbours who had considered her, when Miss Armstead, as a plain dull girl, as little of an addition to the society of Higham Grange as one of the milestones in the park, was truly edifying.

None of them were London-going people; or if they *did* indulge in a season in town, for the purpose of marrying a daughter or extending their wings over a fledgeling son, during his first season in the Guards, they took up their abode on the outskirts of civilisation, on the Arctic side of Oxford Street, and knew nothing of the marketable value of their fellow-creatures. For London has its slavemart of men and women, — ay, and even of lords and ladies, — where people are bought and sold at conventional prices, as much as niggers in a Slave State, or Georgians in the far East.

Mrs. Ommany of Fair Oaks, and Mr. and Mrs. Braddon Branshaw of Branshaw Combe, were consequently puzzled to account for the attentions of the Armsteads and Brookdales to a bald-headed man of certain age, and a Saturnine junior, apparently his clerk who arrived in a fly just before the second day's dinner whose importation of Morning papers overpowered, b

the smell of damp letterpress, the scent of heliotropes and gardenias pervading the drawing-room. — Who in the world could they be? — A Mr. Frere, and a Mr. Marsham! — Yes — the butler certainly announced “Mr. Frere and Mr. Marsham;” — to the ears of that benighted district, much as if he had announced Mr. Smith and Mr. Snooks!

Yet, as Mrs. Braddon Branshaw of Branshaw Combe observed to her daughters when Lady Armstead and Lady Brookdale had retired to the dressing-room of the former, to enjoy the ante-prandial cup of tea with which fashionable ladies damp their appetites and stimulate their spirits for the dinner-table, “there was as much fuss made about those two quizzes, as if they were county members!”

In this contemptuous estimate she was confirmed by the pertinacious manner in which, on the second gong, both senior and junior planted themselves beside the poor relation in the muslin dress, who wore nothing in her hair; “a plain proof,” as Mrs. Braddon Branshaw observed, “that she considered its glossy undulations a sufficient ornament.”

At dinner, the party was increased by the arrival of the two chattering, beardless sons of Mrs. Ommany, who had been out cub-hunting; a deed characterised by Barton Frere in a whisper to Tiny, as barbarous and fratricidal, “*attendu que les loups ne s’entremangent pas.*” But as it was the first day of the season, they felt

entitled to recount, with prodigious variations and embellishments, their feats in the field.

The elder of the Ommany cubs was, in fact, one of the Guards' ensigns, to whose inauguration reference has been already made; and as, though a little *roquet* of the most snappish description, and the height and consistence of a walking-cane, he had figured for nearly a year in the Army List, and six months in the window of the Guards' Club, it was to him Miss Emilia Braddon Branshaw applied (as to a London man!) for information touching the mysterious nondescripts.

"The fellow with the bald head? — Can't put a name upon him — though his face is as familiar to me as the dial-plate at the Horse-guards! — He belongs to one of the best Omnibuses; and one always sees him hanging about Brookes's."

"And the other — whom I heard presented by Lady Brookdale to your mother as Mr. Marsham —"

"Not *the* Marsham, surely?" cried the young guardsman, with unconcealed amazement. "Not the man who wrote the pamphlet?"

"Oh! — an AUTHOR!" rejoined Emilia, with as scornful a smile as if the vilest odour of Grub Street already degraded the room. — "How odd that Lady Brookdale should be so intimate with a person of that kind!"

"*That* kind? — Why, he's one of the greatest swells going! — His brother, who's in my regiment, is called Romney Marsh, because he's some relation to Lord Romney."

"But what was *this* Mr. Marsham's pamphlet about?" inquired Emilia, becoming more interested in the stranger, in learning this aristocratic connection.

"I'm sure I can't tell you. Some confounded political nonsense or other, I suppose; — one of those loose nothings not worth 'sixpence, that sells for a shilling. I remember *my* governor used to get his speeches printed as pamphlets, to inflict on his constituents, to bespeak custom, as auctioneers do their catalogues. I wonder what part of the play this fellow is come to act down in Somersetshire? After dinner I must go and talk to him about Romney Marsh, who is no end of a chum of mine."

But the pamphleteer proved to be unapproachable. He had installed himself beside the lady of the house, as the nearest approach to Tiny he could accomplish without compromising himself and her; and to Lady Armstead the little *roquet* no more dared make advances, than to the Lord Chancellor on the Woolsack. Her sisters had snubbed him so severely in London ball-rooms, lest he should fasten himself on them as a partner, that he stood in great awe of the family.

For the two officials, however, there was ample room beside her sofa. The lady guests had deserted her for her sister-in-law. As if an odour of courtly sanctity exuded from her ladyship's very garments, they admired her ill-cut dowdy gown, and humbly expressed a wish for the pattern of a frightful piece of tapestry, her faded *company-work*, already four years in hand; — besetting

her with a thousand such little foolish questions touching the books, music, preachers, and jewellers in various parts of the country as might have been asked of some English traveller; the long-be-savaged Governor's lady of Tasmania or the Countess of Castle; till poor Lady Brookdale, who seldom found herself required to know anything, or answer anything, became as much puzzled as the over-catechised and ignorant pupil of a Sunday-school.

Gratefully, however, was their pre-occupation appreciated by Frere and Marsham; the discrepancy between the quietude of whose agreeable conversation and the cackle of the young ladies of the Ommanys rendered Lady Armstead painfully conscious that when the woodcocks and the Horsford family rendered their appearance at Higham Grange, the monkey-talk and slang of her "fast" brothers might, in that stately mansion, appear somewhat out of place.

Even Tiny admitted that the officials were seen to far greater advantage amid the tranquillity of country life, than in the feverish pauses of their London career, where thoughtful men are silent, and those who speak most utter any opinions but their own. In Park Lane the table-talk was apt to resemble a theatrical fencing bout, where the chief object of the combatants is to throw their swords in the eyes of the audience.

But in quitting London, George Marsham was careful not to give his officiality to the winds. He came to the country to give a feed of grass to his body and mind. *His last visit to Higham Grange, during the*

bachelorhood of his friend, had passed so pleasantly, aided by the not unimportant adjuncts of capital shooting, capital hunting, capital cellars, and a capital table, that he had looked forward somewhat nervously to the restraints likely to be created in the house by female domination. His baggage must be increased by the addition of starched white chokers and French-varnished boots; and "no smoking would be allowed in the company's carriages." He even thought old Frere superfluously prosy, when, for half-a-dozen stations on their journey down, he enlarged on the merits and attractions of "Lady Armstead's fair friend." He hated the affected periphrase, "fair friend;" — and had discovered no extraordinary charm in Tiny herself, whose unfashioned simplicity was completely thrown into the shade by the smiles and diamonds of the half-dozen duchesses who lionized him as the Junius of the season, — the Coming Man who was to put an extinguisher upon Stanley and Peel.

But now, in those large, cool, uncrowded rooms, where she glided about so gracefully and so much at ease, he found every excuse for the enthusiasm of the old bean, whose compliments came out dry as the kernel of a last year's walnut. — Either she or himself was decidedly altered for the better. Her countenance, always sweet, had acquired a more thoughtful expression, — like that of one who has felt or suffered. Many tears must have fallen from those kindly eyes since he first

saw them, looking weary and inanimate, in Lady Astead's pony-phaeton in the park. They were flecked by lingering clouds like the sky after a storm. He would have given much — he would almost have given the authorship and fame of his pamphlet, — to discover what had befallen her since they parted in Park Lane.

CHAPTER X.

HAD not the lady of Higham Grange completely outgrown and forgotten the Amy Horsford of Cleveland, she would probably have derived some amusement from the puss-in-the-corner vivacity with which her husband's official friends endeavoured to circumvent and distance each other in obtaining a place by the side of Miss Corbet; — in sitting, walking, riding, feeding, the round game after dinner, or the cozy, fire-light chat preceding it.

She was prudent enough, however, to abstain from encouraging either. Tiny, if still heart-free, might safely be left to the dictates of her conscientious reason; and she sat calmly but smilingly aloof, watching the coursing match; the timid hare, and the staunch and resolute greyhounds.

The Miss Braddon Branshaws shrugged their shoulders; for, though anxiously occupied in toadying Lady Brookdale, her little daughter, her little daughter's governess, nay, even her lady's maid, — they could not but perceive that the two stars of the party had become the satellites of the poor relation; while *they* were left to the *giggling boys*, whom their lady-mother alone regarded as belonging to the severer sex.

They could not, however, deny that, whichever might eventually prove the conqueror, Miss Corbet was an unconscious victim. When they pursued, she did not fly; because it never occurred to her that two men of serious purposes, — the one a distinguished author, the other a manufacturer of protocols, — could trouble themselves about an ignorant obscure girl like herself, except as the guest of their official colleague.

Little did she suspect how pretty the ignorant obscure girl was looking when assisting little Victoria Barwell to find in the map the places named in her Geography lesson; while the perpendicular Miss Strickney was taking on the terrace, under an umbrella in the rain, the morning constitutional which formed an important branch of her code of educational morality.

Not all the furbelowed dresses in the show-room of Madame Dévy Einstein, — not all the glittering bracelet in the caskets of Hancock, could have enhanced the charm of her sweet countenance and unaffected manner. She was just the sympathetic household-companion, the gentle, tender being, who seemed created to comfort the home of a harassed careworn man of business.

The indignation of Mrs. Braddon Branshaw, whose daughters she had eclipsed, — the animosity of Mr. Ommany, of Fair Oak, whose chattering sons were reduced to silence by the lofty tone of her two adorers, — would, perhaps, have exploded, but for the patronage vouchsafed by Lady Brookdale to the grand-daughter :

the Rawdons of Heckington; — Grandmamma Rawdon and her knotting-shuttle still hovering like a guardian angel over the destinies of poor Tiny.

"It evidenced a very unusual degree of merit in a young lady of such tender years," Lord Brookdale sententiously observed, in reply to Mrs. Braddon Branshaw's disparaging comments, "to have attracted the attention of a man of such remarkable abilities as Mr. Marsham."

"Say, rather," added his brother-in-law, "when, without effort on her own part, a girl of small fortune and moderate connections, enslaves a practised man of the world, like Barton Frere; who would give his head (though a bald one) to make her his wife."

And either of the two cackling Ommanys, after hearing such a verdict pronounced by so eminent a man as Sir James Armstead, seconding a Lord of the Bed-chamber, would gladly have hurried off to the feet of Miss Corbet, but for the awe in which they stood of their London rivals.

It was Marsham, meanwhile, who made most way towards the winning post. With Machiavelian tact he had discovered Miss Corbet's vulnerable point; and whenever he could obtain her ear, regaled it with arguments concerning Colonial legislation — Negro-apprenticeship, — and other parliamentary Tropicisms so thoroughly exhausted for a person not engrossed by the *interests of the Fredville Plantation*, that the most

patient House that ever yawned would have been counted out after the first five sentences.

Certain prolonged *tête-à-têtes*, while Tiny was taking her customary morning-walk under a sunny wall half a mile in length, clothed with fine old Magnolia trees, a discovery of which primmed up the thin mouths of the Miss Braddon Branshaws into an all but imperceptible line, were solely occupied by a *résumé* of the import and export duties of the Island of Jamaica, which the dryest Red-tapist would have voted a bore.

"Rather slow, all this, eh, Miss Corbet?" cackled the Guardsman-brother of the Ommany-gemini, — venturing on the second day of his visit to shirk the shooting-party, apparently for the purpose of infringing on George Marsham's much-prized promenade. "I expected we should have had something stunning at Higham Grange as it is a sort of bridal party; — charades, or tableaux or post, or racing. — Instead of which, it's duller than before old Armstead married. I wish we'd your brother Romney here, Mr. Marsham, to show them a thing or two."

"I know very little of the habits of my brother," replied the Secretary, coldly. "We do not frequent the same Clubs or the same society. But I trust that, being still little more than an Eton boy, he does not pretend to impose his tastes or opinions upon rational society."

If this constrained severity purported to banish the intruder from a walk evidently planned only for two

and ineffectual. The *roquet* took it all in good Chaff being the modern language in which he was advised to "go up" for examination at it, he took it for granted, that the chaff of the room and of the Treasury Chambers, were dialects.

"You've a famous chance before you," he regained addressing Miss Corbet. "The Turbervilles, who are here to-day, are to have a gorgeous function to-morrow; and though Lady Armstead seems too ill to take much trouble, I'm sure my mother will support you. The Turbervilles are neighbours and we mean to lend them a hand at their

They would scarcely advise you to make the Turbervilles' acquaintance," observed Marsham, in an audible voice to Miss Corbet. "They are dreadful people."

"Yes, I always understood," exclaimed young Omphale, "that they were cousins of yours?" —

"The Turberville is a cousin of my mother. But she is married to an objectionable man, and I know nothing of her."

"Well, by Jove, that beats — But I promise you, Marsham," said he, interrupting himself, "Romney will never get out of their house."

"Probably. Between him and them, there may be some affinities."

"I don't know anything about affinities. But it was

Romney who gave them the name of the rich and high-flavoured Ts."

"Rich, they certainly are. Should you visit Turberville Abbey," said he, pointedly addressing Miss Corbet, — "you will find the gold of the family oozing out in every direction where gold can be out of place. — I believe they gild the tails of their sheep and scythes of their labourers. — My father, a simple-minded man of the old school, once spent a few days with them, and assured me that not a flash invention of the *nouveauté* shops of London or Paris, — things one never sees without shrugging one's shoulders and wondering whether there are fools capable of buying them, — but he found at the Abbey."

"It certainly is the most beautifully-furnished house in the kingdom," said the Guardsman, misunderstanding his drift. "Romney Marsh calls it the Monte-Cristol Palace."

"The Turberville grandfather is supposed to have been a Jew," resumed Marsham. "And the Israelitish taint is as perceptible in his gaudy tastes as in his noisy vulgarity. Turberville brags of his offspring as if he were crying his wares. There is a sharpish lad of a son, whom he is always puffing as if he were a sixteen-bladed penknife or a net of oranges."

"I'd rather buy Charley Turberville than sell him, any day of the week," retorted the Guardsman, at length *losing temper*. "He's the best and best-looking chap on

of the earth. And Charley is not one of your
who live by their wits, — though his wits might
be handsomely. Charley's an only son, with
a thousand a year hanging over his head; and the
spend twice as many more."

fear, then, that he will want backing from his
— though his cousins may be less alive to his
observed George Marsham, drily. "I believe the
to which you just now alluded, is given to
rate his coming of age. Armstead mentioned
esterday, that Higham Grange and all its con-
e invited."

they? — Oh! come, — that's jolly! — Then
go, Miss Corbet?" said the poor boy, whose
ears could not imagine resistance to a ball-in-

great object it seems of the Turbervilles," ob-
marsham, intercepting her reply, — "is to secure
cousins. My worthy cousins have a profound
for the merest fringe on the uttermost gar-
royalty. They probably expect Lord Brookdale
his appearance with a lion on one shoulder, and
on the other. How disappointed they will be
y see such a quiet, inostensible little couple,
small voices will be drowned by the full-
ar of Mr. Turberville, like Sam Patch in the
agara. — At what are you smiling?" added he,
per, to poor Tiny, — trusting perhaps that the

sudden brightness of her countenance was caused by her pleasantries.

"I was thinking how like you speak, sometimes, to my cousin Willy!"

"The cousin with whom I heard my friend Frere accuse you of taking twilight-walks in Hyde Park?"

"The cousin with whom I took a single walk this spring."

"And who is coming, perhaps, to the Monte-Cristol-Palace ball," he continued, — perceiving that he had at last succeeded in snubbing the young standard-bearer into lagging behind.

"Alas, no!" replied Miss Corbet with grave frankness, — "for I am fonder of *my* cousins than you appear to be of yours. Willy Enmore has sailed for the West Indies. Willy Enmore is now in Jamaica."

The young ensign had not received half so unkind a cut as this. — To have been beguiled into those trite Essays on Abolition and the Sugar Duties, by one so seeming-simple as Miss Corbet, was indeed a settler to a man who fancied himself able to pull the strings of an administration, and fill or empty the gallery of the House of Commons!

When the Turbervilles made their appearance that evening, they experienced the usual reaction that awaits people unjustly aspersed. There was nothing in their *manners*, dress, or appearance to justify the sarcasms of George Marsham; who belonged to the modern school

only too numerous, of people who pretend to enhance their personal consequence by crying down their relations.

Mr. Turberville did not bawl or brawl as predicted; and his wife, though, according to the dictum of the Guards' Club, she might be "rich and high-flavoured," proved a pleasant ladylike woman, who was a considerable addition to the party. That Mr. Marsham, if an amusing companion, was a very ill-natured critic, was clearly apparent; and after noticing the cousinly cordiality with which he was saluted by the new-comers, it would have required a very large amount of West Indian policy to replace him in the good opinion of Miss Corbet.

That the handsome and mannerly young man whose majority was on the eve of celebration, was the origin of his cousin's uncharitableness, did not occur to her; for, still believing Lady Armstead's assertion, that "George Marsham was over-head-in-ears in love with her dear Tiny," to be one of the many coinages of her fanciful brain, she was not on her guard against his jealousy. — But she *did* infer, from a certain strength of determination latent in the dark eyes of Charles Turberville, that in *his* presence his parents must not be disparaged.

Earnestly therefore did she hope that the cackling little Guardsman would not, inadvertently or designedly, repeat to the best fellow on the face of the earth the malicious strictures uttered by the bitter brother of Heckington. L.

berville family, — son included, — that was to strangers, — unless of the degree ney; an urbanity attributed both by her her enemies in the house, to the influence of the Abbey.

"Like the rest of them, — like the rest muttered George Marsham, as he arranged his supererogative muslin tie. "Jamaica is out of the map, by a Somersetshire park in Belgrave Square!" — Just as Barton the same moment desponding by comparison his sallow face and nude caput, with that of the handsome Charley, who stood among Apollo, with his quiver full of arrows.

For the enlargement of the dinner-party

THE END

mitted to be courted and cross-questioned. — From his answers, she obtained a glimpse of the reverse of the tapestry so maliciously distorted by George Marsham.

"I hear there are to be a thousand people at your ball on the 15th," said the young lady, in a tone of gratulation.

"A thousand? I trust not — for the sake of the dancers, — of whom I hope you will be one," — he replied; "for our rooms are neither large nor lofty. The 'thousand' you have heard mentioned, probably alluded to the neighbouring poor, who are to be 'beefed and aled' all the morning, in marquees in the park. My dear old father, aware that I am never likely to set the Thames on fire, is going to do his best, by blaze of bonfires and spill of beer, to make my existence heard of in the county."

"I am quite sure there is no occasion for any effort of the kind," replied Miss Emilia, with a caressing smile. "But we are not the less obliged to Mr. Turberville for the charming entertainment we are promised. Mamma has been endeavouring to persuade Lord and Lady Brookdale to stay for it, and to sleep at Branshaw Combe, which is so much nearer than the Grange."

"Stay for it? — Why the engagement is nearly as old as I am. — It was to be here on the 15th that they made their present visit. Before her marriage, Lady Brookdale was the dearest friend of my mother. It was

through that connection, that our cousin, George Marsham, was first introduced to Sir James Armstead."

There was nothing in the fact or the relationship, to interest the fair Emilia; though she continued to smile as approvingly into the face of her informant as if he were describing some beautiful scene or noble action. But to Tiny, the statement afforded infinite discouragement. Was this the way in which people of the world disowned their relations, slandered their benefactors, and related plausible anecdotes without a grain of foundation? Could not even the fine abilities of this accomplished Mr. Marsham raise him above the meanness of decrying those to whom he did not wish to appear under an obligation? She was shocked! He might *talk* like her cousin Willy. But between their natures, she thanked Heaven, there was not a particle of resemblance. The official man was as cold and cruel as he was clever. It was not to *him* she could have confided the prospects of her schoolboy brother! —

The evening, a rare event at Higham Grange, was devoted to music. Mr. Turberville, not having had his inborn taste for tune dinned out of him by the practising of daughters, was one of those who never find themselves in company with misses in muslin gowns, without insisting that the piano should be opened. He knew that Mrs. Braddon Branshaw would be thankful to him for affording a signal for the duets in which her daughters excelled; and the Ommany lads were equally grat

l for anything that interrupted the "eternal holding
th of those stupid old fogeys, who fancied themselves
ensed, in parliament or out, to deal in prose."

But what disconcerted the licensed prozers far more
an the dislocation of their evening, was to find Miss
rhet take part in the concert. — She, who so shrank
m exhibition, — she, of whose musical talents *they*
re not even aware, — evidently thought it worth
ile to display them for the captivation of the "rich,
gh-flavoured Ts." After the Miss Braddon Branshaws
d thundered their loudest Thalberg, with an energy
d emphasis which the instrument could scarcely bear
thout a groan, Mrs. Ommany endeavoured to coax the
unger of her cubs into favouring them with one of
ardi's songs. And so eagerly did she press the fair
usicians present to accompany the mellifluous guards-
an, that at length Lady Armstead appealed to the as-
stance of her friend.

"There are sets and sets of Verdi's songs in your
een portfolio, dear Tiny!" said she. And the book
as accordingly sent for, and "La Mia Letizia" sung,
nd accompanied in a style that drew from Mr. Turber-
ille an enthusiastic encore.

That a young lady possessing a large collection of
ocal music, must be herself a songstress, was suffi-
iently apparent to expose her to the solicitations of the
ld Melomane; nor would young Ommany hear of her
aving the piano, without paying the usual tax. She

did not, however, draw upon the resources of the great music-book. One of cousin Willy's German ballads, — a novelty to the whole party, — was so simply and thrillingly "said" rather than sung, as to prove that however obtuse she might have been in conjugating her verbs under his tuition, she had learned to imitate the exquisite grace and modulation which distinguished her vocal performances.

Very general was the applause. Some praised the sweetness of her voice, — some the expressiveness of her style; — while Sir James secretly applauded the discretion which had so long kept him in ignorance that he possessed a musical inmate, and Lord Brookdale gave the finishing touch to the delight of the country-neighbours, by stating that he "had heard that charming melody at Windsor Castle," from some Serene Highness whose name he quoted in an accent which would have puzzled the oldest inhabitant of the Holy Roman Empire.

To the real enthusiasm excited by the song, succeeded the pretended enthusiasm with which real sentiments are usually exaggerated to fill up the vacuum of society. The young ladies, more especially, indulged in magnanimous ecstasies; choosing to be thought affected rather than envious or cold. The Braddon Branshaw implored poor Tiny's permission to copy that "divine little ballad," the name of which the hope of the Ommaney was inscribing in a small morocco notecase (which

ped would pass for a betting-book), that he might bid for it by the morrow's post.

"I will teach it to both of you, as I learned it self, — by ear," said Miss Corbet, good-humouredly. "I never saw it in print. It was taught me by my cousin, Mr. Enmore."

"*Enmore?* — Not Arthur? — Not my Eton chum?" — exclaimed Charles Turberville, who, stationed behind his demonstrative sire, had been hitherto a silent spectator. "Surely Arthur Enmore is no musician? — He is a Fusboz, 'he has not got a singing face.'"

"Of that you are a better judge than myself," replied Miss Corbet, laughing, "for the face of my cousin Arthur I have not seen these six years. It was his younger brother, who, on his recent return from Dresden, taught me a few German ballads."

"The younger brother, in whose favour he was disgraced?" persisted Mr. Turberville. "I heard something about it from Bob Horsford, whom I met in Paris last spring. When I found that my old friend Enmore had changed his name to Rawdon, I concluded it was a fortune, and was about to wish him joy. But Horsford advised me to defer my congratulations; and told me that, so far from being better off than he used to be, Arthur had been *volé comme dans un bois*."

"Mr. Horsford is brother to Lady Armstead," said Mr. Turberville, gravely, "and I will therefore make no remark on the accuracy of his information. But perhaps you have

not heard of the terrible accident which befel my cousin Arthur after you parted in Paris?"

And on Charles Turberville's admitting both *his* ignorance and interest in the matter, she proceeded to give him, in a lower and more confidential voice, the history of the Interlaken misfortune.

The long and low conversation that ensued between them, to which the animated gestures and exclamations of Arthur's Eton friend seemed to assign extraordinary importance, certainly warranted the group collected at the further end of the room in believing that Miss Corbet was taking extraordinary pains to ingratiate herself with the handsome heir of Turberville Abbey. Long before the evening was over, the little guardsman had begun to think him something short of being the best fellow on the face of the earth; while George Marsham, who was pretending to skim the leading articles of the evening papers, which had just made their appearance, might have been overheard muttering between his teeth his usual diatribe against the sex of — "All alike, by Jove! — *all* just alike!" —

CHAPTER XL

A PARTY assembled in a country-house, possesses a singular faculty for maturing loves or hates. Half-a-week's acquaintance in London, effects less than the number of days will accomplish among people living under the same roof, assembling three times a round the same table.

Before the Turbervilles quitted Higham Grange, they warmed up even the coldest of its inmates into the keenest interest in their impending fête. There was something so cordial and so genuine in the joy of the father exulting to see his "noble fellow of a son" attain his estate, that it carried away every heart in the same direction. — So far from being actuated by love or pomp or display, all the preparations in progress at Higham Abbey were based upon the principle of creating for everybody within reach a happy day, on that which affirmed the parental triumph of its master and mistress. The absence of the dukes in the land might have signified their inability to be present at the ball, without making either of them "rich and high-flavoured Ts" a particle more conscious of the goodness of Providence in granting them each a son.

Lady Armstead began to regret that the woodcocks

did not make their appearance in Somersetshire a week or two earlier; so certain was she that Flo. and Carry would have enjoyed the brilliant entertainment impending; and though, at her husband's entreaty, she renounced her own intention to join the party, either from Branshaw Combe or Fair Oak, (for the better certainty that twenty-one years later in the history of the world, a similar celebration might take place at Higham Grange,) she insisted that Tiny should accompany the Brookdales to the ball.

Aware, now that their acquaintance had deepened into friendship, how large a portion of Miss Corbet's allowance found its way to Grenfield House in the shape of gifts for the boys or their mother, she had taken care to provide from London such a dress for her young friend as Sir James deemed indispensable to the occasion. It was, in fact, to be his own cadeau to his pretty guest; and he contrived to lose a bet to her which justified the offering; — what the French call a “discrétion,” — the object lost, depending on the selection of the loser.

But the most singular part of the affair was that Marsham and Frere though overdue in Whitehall, and having largely overstayed at the Grange the date of their invitation, had accepted the strenuous invitation of the Turbervilles. The sarcastic pamphleteer was perhaps curious to ascertain by ocular demonstration whether, like the *Menteur véridique* of the stage, his ill-nature concerning the Abbey and its inmates would be verified

by their exorbitant magnificence; and old Frere anxious to satisfy himself that he had been cut out by irresistible advantages. At all events, to the ball they were going. Tiny, in the airy white tulle ball-dress trimmed with clematis, of whose arrival her girlish exclamations of delight and gratitude had duly apprised them, would float before their eyes, a charming vision; — perhaps for the last time — before they beheld her in the matronly dignities which they inferred to be the object of her ambition.

Most country-neighbourhoods contain a regnant Thane or Grandee; proprietor of some noble castle or court which serves as regulation-post to its minor morals, and whereon floats a flag when the family is in residence; the female partner of whose honours maintains the privilege of sitting nearest, at every dinner-party, to the master of the house, the turbot and the haunch, — of opening every ball and every railway, and heading every local subscription.

But there happened to be no Right Honourable Countess of Anything, either with or without Lady-daughters, within reach of Turberville Abbey; and there being consequently no vested rights or dignities to interfere with his inclinations, the young hero of the birthday-fête was free to choose the prettiest girl or handsomest woman among the guests. Nor were his parents, in spite of George Marsham's uncousinly insinuations, the people to thwart his choice. That he had already fixed

upon Miss Corbet as his partner, might be a com to her own attractions or to the position held district by her hosts. But that Mr. Turbervil approved the selection, was manifested at the mo their departure from Higham Grange, by the lo in which, on taking leave of the party, he laid junctions on Tiny not to bother Sir James An head-gardener to force roses or camellias for her t as she would find one awaiting her at Tur Abbey on the 15th, such as had never yet been the county.

So vociferous, indeed, was the jolly old ge while shaking her by the hand, that the portrait Welsh judges and Dutch admirals hanging in oak corridor where his farewell was spoken, vib their frames, while the Braddon Branshaw damse had been hoarding up grievances throughout the puckered their brows in an additional contractio nature, at finding what they had long regarded kingdom, taken from them.

Next day, — the -one still intervening betw expectant neighbourhood and the monster festiv the party assembled at the Grange dispersed t several homes; and though both Lady Brookd Tiny were thus deprived of the incense which, from turning their heads, only caused them to ac *clearing of strangers from the gallery was hailed relief. Even the censorious pamphleteer was s*

it that Miss Corbet, amid the distinctions showered on her, remained pure from all self-consciousness. As poor Lady Brookdale, she looked only a little stupider than usual.

They were sitting together chatting by pleasant fire-light in the library; waiting for the dressing-gong to sound, and congratulating themselves that, like the empire of France at the Vienna Congress, they were reduced to their just integrity;" when a grating of wheels on the gravel, and the clang of the hall bell, announced an arrival.

No one was expected. No one was wanted. Everybody began to speculate concerning the new comer; and Lady Armstead thoughtlessly exclaimed that it must be one of those foolish Ommany boys, or Mr. Turberle come back to look for his heart or his walking-stick, carelessly left behind.

The butler speedily made his appearance for the solution of their doubts. But instead of throwing open the door with his usual portly majesty to announce a guest, he glided up to Miss Corbet, and informed her, in a mysterious whisper, that there was "a person in the hall wishing to speak to her."

"I told you so, Tiny!" cried Lady Armstead, who had overheard the communication. "I wonder which of them it is? — Pray let him be shown in here — We are all going up to dress."

But *Tiny*, in whom the grave demeanour of the

butler had excited different surmises, was already out of the room. She felt convinced that the messenger from home. — She sadly feared that something amiss.

Scarcely had she followed him into the dimly-lit passage leading from the bright hall to the offices, when a pair of rough arms were thrown round her neck certainly not those of either of the visitors predicted by her friend Amy; and for a moment, she was more startled than pleased by so impetuous a greeting. That the proprietor of the rough arms was sobbing violently, did not tend to reassure her; but the ejaculation of "Oh! Sophia, my dear!" which soon became intelligible, satisfied her that the individual so entirely cloaked as to have been at first unrecognisable, was no other than her former nurse; — the self-same Susan who, to old Rawdon of Harley Street, had described her nursing as "so turribly put upon," — and who had subsequently become wife and widow of the Grenfield parish-clerk.

The good woman had not, however, diverged so far from her orbit only to sob and ejaculate. Her errand and it was a sad one, was quickly told. Mrs. Colborne from whom her stepdaughter had heard the previous day, in her usual crepuscular state of health and spirits had been suddenly attacked with spasms of the kind from which the worst results were anticipated. The only audible words she had since articulated, conveyed a request to see her own dear Tiny before she died.

safe if not suitable escort, Susan Moore had instantly summoned and despatched by Mr. Corbet, home his daughter; and in almost as short a time as had taken to make the explanation, and long enough for the fly-horses and driver considered themselves the better for Higham cheer to renew their preparations were accomplished. — She was off. — For some time past, she had been reproaching herself for her protracted absence from home; that both her father and Mrs. Corbet seemed to prolongation, she would have returned to them from London, instead of accompanying the Armistead to Somersetshire. If she now proved too late to find her stepmother alive, she felt that she should give herself.

This was rapidly explained to the sympathising Lady Armistead, so evident was the sincerity of her grief and the hurried farewell, that Lady Armistead ventured to allude to the Abbey fête, or the re-absence would occasion. All she could do was to wrap up the traveller, for her hasty departure; and when Sir James placed her in the fly of her ungainly chaperon, he took leave of her with affectionate concern. He knew all that his daughter would lose by her absence. He knew all *he* should do, and all *he* should risk, if *her* companionship were replaced by that of Flo. or Carry!

It was the regret for her absence and its cause,

expressed round the dinner-table. Barton Frere, who, ever since the Turberville ball was in perspective, had cheerfully predicted a heavy fall of snow, now darkened his prognostication into a severe frost, and was certain Miss Corbet would take cold. The foresighted Lady Brookdale, almost as much impressed by the beauty of the ball-dress prepared for her as Susan Moore, who had seen it extended in her nursling's dressing-room, was full of regrets that it should be wasted, — “for if her stepmother died, a three months' mourning would throw it out of fashion.” While her lord, after expressing his conviction that their amiable young friend, in her affliction, had not given a thought to the ball, added, that the person he was most sorry for was young Turberville, who was evidently desperately smitten.

“She would make him a charming wife,” he said. “So different from that unfortunately increasing class of fast young ladies! — The girls of the present day really indulge in as much slang as their brothers. I heard of one of them, in Leicestershire, leaping the Whissendine brook: — of another, in the Highlands, landing a salmon or bringing down a stag; — of a third, at Cowes, sailing her father's yacht for the Cup; — and am inclined to exclaim — *‘Ne sutor ultra crepidam,’* or no young lady beyond her petticoats!”

“Miss Corbet is, as you say, a truly feminine creature,” rejoined Sir James, ever conscientious in his verdict. “But I cannot agree with you that she would

a good wife for young Turberville. No one admires her more than I do. But I would rather she married my brother, than my son. Pliant and amenable as she is, a man whose character is formed, and who might be trusted with the modelling of hers, would be better for her than a young fellow who would make a slave of her, and of whom she would make nothing in return."

"Who can tell what any girl of her age will make of herself, or anybody?" cried George Marsham, — secretly of opinion that a blue-eyed slave, with Tiny's sweet voice and temper, would be one of the most acceptable vouchsafings of Providence. — "Scarcely eighteen, — ignorant of the world, — as dependent for her future qualities on the hands into which she may fall, as a plant on the soil and aspect in which it is cultivated!"

"Well, I'm sure I hope the hands will be good, and the aspect favourable," rejoined the good-natured Lord Brookdale. "I never saw a young lady whom I should rather like my daughter to resemble, or my son to make his wife."

And Barton Frere, the slight tinge in whose sallow cheeks, and slight tremor in whose usually well-disciplined voice was perhaps attributable to a few extra glasses added to his stint of sherry by way of consolation for Tiny's departure — secretly rejoiced that, under such circumstances, the future Lord Brookdale was still

busy with his Delectus and brandy-balls, in the Lo school at Harrow.

The young traveller, meanwhile, was far more int on those towards whom she was journeying, than th she left behind. There had been a strong tug at heart in parting from Amy; whom she had forme liked as an acquaintance, but now loved as a frie Not from recent discovery of superior qualities or un pected endowments in Lady Armstead; but from motive that originates most human friendships, — mut acts of kindness, and mutual sentiments of gratitu Both Amy and her husband had been undeviating thoughtful for her comfort; and, accustomed as she v at home to study the requirements of an invalid, l affectionate attendance had begun to be indispensable her ailing friend. But, mile by mile, station by stati these regrets gave way to the impression that she v still more wanted at Grenfield; and by the time t mail-train reached London, at an hour which in Octol is still night, she would not hear of accomplishing l father's plan that she should take a few hours' rest Hertford Street. Proceeding at once to the King's Cr Station, she reached home by day-break; and after t first painful moments of family greeting, derived so consolation from learning that Mrs. Corbet had pass a good night, and was anxiously expecting her.

A respite was necessary to regain her composit
But how compose herself, with two boisterous b

resetting her with caresses? — Alfred had been brought home from school to take leave of his mother; and, so long accustomed to see her an invalid, to believe that death was come at last, was far too much gratified by an unexpected visit to Grenfield, Edgar, and Tiny, to be duly impressed by the sad occasion of his visit.

“How you are grown, Tiny! — Quite a woman, — and a pretty one, too!” was his first exclamation on seeing his sister. “It was very dull without you here, last holidays; — and one day, when papa and I met the Horsford tribe riding on Hetherly Common, they insisted on wishing us joy, and declared you were going to be married to your cousin Willy, — that stunning fellow, who came to see me at Aldenham, and tipped me so famously. But papa was very angry: and when they rode off, called them no end of names, and bad me not repeat to any one the nonsense they had been talking.”

“But tell me about dear mamma, Alfred,” sobbed Miss Corbet, drying his chubby face, on which her tears had been falling. “Has Dr. Ashe been here to-day? — Is my father still in her room?”

“Dr. Ashe slept in the house, last night; and papa is always up-stairs. He makes Edgar and me take our boots off before we go into the room. But don’t cry, Tiny, you know how often poor mamma has been ill before, and how well you always used to nurse her.”

“And I am come to nurse her again, Alfred; and we

will all do our best. You boys must not jump about make a noise. We must all — *all* do our best."

But the best poor Tiny found to do just then, was cry her eyes out on her brother's shoulder. Something in the aspect of the servants, and atmosphere of house, seemed to warn her that deeper misery was hand.

Hard indeed was it for her to govern her emotions when, on approaching the bedside of the sufferer, she saw the gleam of joy that lighted up Mrs. Corbet's wasted face. No mother could have breathed more tenderly in her ear the faint words, — "My child, my child!" — than did her father's dying wife.

Wanting courage to witness their meeting, Mr. Corbet had crept from the room to hide the tears which were no shame to his manly nature; and Tiny could therefore express her almost indignant regrets at not having been sooner sent for.

"It has all been so sudden," feebly murmured her stepmother, twining her thin, cold fingers round the trembling hand she was holding. "My summons, after so many years of suffering, was still unlooked for. I never for such a summons, — such a parting, darling child, who is ever prepared? — And among many mercies vouchsafed me, Tiny, is that I have lived to see your face again! I wanted to thank you for all your daughter-like love and goodness to me; and to ask you — to tell you —" she paused. Tears choked her utterance.

tears, which, in spite of all her patient self-control, did not — could not be repressed.

"You wanted to ask me?" faltered Miss Corbet, trembling, lest the struggle of these emotions should be much for the invalid; and that she might pass away without explaining her last wishes.

"That you would promise to take my place as mother to the boys. Your father loves his children dearly. But I have wasted his life, Tiny. My sickness has encroached upon his time. He has lost the habit of looking after his family. Everything here has been going wrong since you have been away. Promise that you will give those boys an orderly home, and undertake the duties to which my poor weak frame was unequal."

Firmly, though in a low, sad voice, was the promise given.

"I ought never to have left you, mamma. I was rash, foolish, worldly-minded —"

"No, no! You felt with the feelings natural to my age. But now, with such a responsibility on your shoulders, you must feel with the feelings of *mine*; with the solicitude of a wife, and pity of a mother. You must sympathize with the boys when they are troublesome, — with your father when he is careless and procrastinating. You must think for them all, — you must act for them all. In so poor a house, darling, there is much to be borne, — much to be considered. No time for play-work at Gren-

field!" said she, endeavouring to smile, and fondly holding the hand that was clasped in her own.

Did Mrs. Corbet imagine that, in the lapse of less than a year's absence, Tiny had forgotten all this which did the developed beauty and grace of her stepdaughter alarm her dying eyes with the fear that her humble duties as teacher and housekeeper, were an outgrown? — Alas! the motive of her appeal was apparent.

"We heard last summer that you were engaged to be married to William Enmore?" added Mrs. Corbet pausing for a time to gather strength.

"Had it been so, dearest mamma, you would have heard it first from myself. There was no foundation for the report."

"Thank God! — I earnestly thank God!" murmured Mrs. Corbet, raising the hand of her stepdaughter to her lips. "Not alone for selfish reasons; — to have you settle in the West Indies, out of reach of sight of poor Corbet and the boys, was a terrible consideration. But we dreaded the thought of marrying Reginald Enmore's son. Never was there a more cruel husband, or more ferocious man. No good can come of such a race!"

"Not quite a charitable conclusion, surely, mother. Children do not always take after their parents."

"Often more than otherwise. And those boys of the *Enmores* seem to have afforded early indications

ir father's blood was warm in their veins. I have
ard even *you*, Tiny, as a child, speak of them with
ror."

"Most schoolboys are rough."

"But not *cruel*, — not *wicked*!" —

"Neither, I assure you, either was, nor is, my cousin
illy."

"You *are* engaged to him, then, Tiny? You *are*
ached to him?" —

"There has never been the smallest question of love
tween us. On the contrary, Willy openly professes
inability to like me otherwise than as a cousin."

"His father was a bitter enemy to your mother; and
or Mrs. Corbet feared as much as she disliked him.
was the greatest relief to her when he went to settle
Fredville. His violence was the terror of the whole
mily. Oh, Tiny! if you did but know how I trembled
hen I thought of your being carried off to Jamaica, as
rs. Enmore was, to waste her youth in an unwhole-
me climate, with a savage to embitter her life. But
y fears are over now, darling. You would not, at
ch a moment, deceive me; — nay, at no moment have
u ever deceived me! From a child you were all truth
d honesty. And now, kiss me once more, darling, and
d me good bye. — I have done too much."

The effect of the sedatives which had afforded her a
ght's rest and *strength* for her much coveted interview.

with her stepdaughter, was giving way. The pangs of her agonizing malady again made themselves felt. Though she strictly forbade that Tiny should be admitted to her room, to be pained by the sight of her sufferings, within an hour she was again almost frantic from torture. But it was not to last long. When Dr. Ashe arrived, he came only to take a final leave. Before evening, she was at rest.

From that moment, Miss Corbet, though overcome with fatigue and sorrow, entered upon the duties of the sacred mission entrusted to her. She endeavoured to recal all that had been done in Harley Street, at the death of her grandmother. She took care that the heavy sleep into which her father had fallen after his prolonged vigils, should not be disturbed. She comforted the terror-stricken boys, to whom the shadow of death was a fearful mystery. She relieved the labours of the overtasked servants. But above all, she prayed fervently that peace might be with the dead; — with herself, strength to replace her in that desolate home.

For desolate indeed it was. Though the duties of the moment were too urgent to admit of susceptibility to trivial annoyances, she could not but feel, during the silent solitary hours that ensued, not only the painful contrast between the house of feasting and the house of mourning, but the change from a large well-regulated *establishment*, and quiet, spacious, well-warmed, well-

lighted house, to the poor neglected dwelling where every sound was audible, — where warmth, and light, and attendance must be strictly economised, — where every wish met with an obstacle, and even breath and movement had to be calculated. There, duty was no longer a name. As the poor dead wife had observed — no leisure for play-work at Grenfield! —

Her perception of all this, and the severe contrasts of light and shade through which she had been hurried, preserved her at least from slighter repinings; and by such vicissitudes is the human character formed, and the human mind strengthened, more than by years of abstract study or ordinary experience.

The vision of Mirza, committed to memory, would not have taught her half so much as her miserable lonely watch at the feet of the quiet dead; the woman who had lived a life of suffering, in all patience, piety, and resignation, and died humbly and hopefully the death of the just.

“That girl of Corbet’s has grown up a pearl of price,” said Dr. Ashe to Mrs. Horsford, — to one of whose finger-aches he was administering, shortly afterwards; “thoughtful, loving, self-denying, — a very angel in the house! — I went there once or twice before the funeral, to see whether neighbourly help was wanting. Nothing! — She had provided money, sense, energy —

all that poor Corbet himself would have been unable to supply. — It makes me half repent having lived a bachelor all my days, to see him so watched over by such a gem of a daughter —!”

CHAPTER XII.

STER is a dreary time to be sorry in. — In the season of the year, the sunshine and summer ch invite, nay, almost compel to out-door exercising healing to the soul. But the man who has er over his griefs and bereavements in a smoky overlooking a garden and paddock smothered in without books to cheer him or philosophy to with a sorrowing child hanging round his knees, knowledge that his motherless school-boy is at a distance, has indeed cause to bless the companionship of such a daughter as the one in Mr. Corbet was beginning to find far more of "than of "Tiny."

was a woman now, — a comfort, — a solace. s what he remembered her mother when she n his affections, before Rawdon-of-Heckington- d tyrannised over her fate or cankered her

that he was of a turn of mind to remain long able. As readily as his second wife had re- in his heart the lost mother of Tiny, did Tiny his second wife. He was the sort of purposeless *ing, which, like certain plants, attaches itself to*

the nearest object, — stick or stone, or noble tree. That his daughter was well supplied with money, and that the household was better paid and organised than it had been for many a year, provoked neither surprise nor anxiety. Her rich aunt had probably done her duty by her sister's child. The couple of hundred pounds which the poor girl's earnest supplications had wrung from her trustee, out of the savings of her minority, passed with Henry Corbet as the careless gift of his sister-in-law!

His sister-in-law, — from whom not so much as a decent expression of sympathy had been elicited by the notification of Mrs. Corbet's death! In answer to her niece's letter, written in deep affliction, to announce this sad event, she crudely expressed her opinion that it must be a happy release for herself and all her family.

Sixteen long years had not obtained her forgiveness for the precipitancy with which Mr. Corbet had chosen to replace her sister; or the stupid contentedness with which he had subsided from Heckington Hall to his hovel at Grenfield. Her pride and her resentments were all unappeasable: and she alluded with far greater interest to the influenza prevailing just then at St. Leonards, in which Harding and Parkins were laid up, than to the decease of the poor woman who had proved so fond a stepmother to her sister's child.

That to her sons, or their whereabouts, she should *not advert*, was, therefore, the less surprising. Still

poor Tiny was of opinion that a few words announcing Arthur's restoration to health, or Willy's safe arrival in Jamaica, would have been a more rational addition to Mrs. Enmore's measured letter of condolence, than the history of Parkins's cough.

It was not from that quarter that a ray of light was to brighten the gloom of her present existence. There was far less of kindness in Mrs. Enmore's mode of addressing her than before her visit to Hertford Street; the old lady probably still resenting the ascendancy she had obtained over her cousin.

But for her brother Alfred's revelation of the report circulated by the Horsfords, Tiny would have expressed without hesitation, to Willy himself, her anxiety to hear of his welfare, and of the fruition of his plans for the benefit of his people and estates. But now, it would have seemed a partial forfeiture of her pledge to the dead. Either she must write clandestinely, which she considered unworthy of herself; or by writing openly, and placing her letter in the postbag, she might give pain to her father. All communication, therefore, was cut off between herself and that heart's-companion, who, during the boyhood of Alfred and Edgar, seemed entitled to a brother's place in her regard.

She endeavoured to think as little of him as possible. — The books he had given her, choice selections from his store and inscribed with her name, had been forwarded to Grenfield by Mrs. Enmore. But from these,

she studiously turned away; except at *very* leisure hours as a reward for household industry, after revising long neglected lists, assisting in a fresh supply of clothes for her father and the boys, and taking care that the rents in the house-linen were no longer darned with pack-thread. Then, in some cozy half hour, when little Edgar's noise was stilled in bed, and her father was dozing quietly by the fireside in his old arm-chair, between the three cups of tea which thus prolonged filled up his evening, she was free to take up her beloved square Leipsick volumes; — her Uhland and Tieck; of which a burst of reminiscent tears occasionally blotted the pages. — Were they dedicated to the memory of the departed sufferer, whose cold sofa was now wheeled back to the wall?

It was some comfort that, in this gloomy interval, she was undisturbed by the officious kindness of neighbours. Clevelands was deserted. The Horsfords were in Somersetshire; and she was left to the unmolested discharge of her duties. Of these, one of the most painful was the distribution between her stepmother's faithful attendants, of the presents which Mr. Corbet felt to be their due; and though it would have been far more agreeable to the delicate-minded girl to whom he delegated the task, to commit to the flames the poor old shawls and gowns so grievously familiar to her eyes : *to seem* a very portion of the dead, the thing must be *done*. Though to *her* it appeared sacrilege to touch the

homely objects, reflection reminded her that were such hoards to be rendered sacred, the surface of the earth would scarcely contain them; and that the Almighty, who has decreed the rapid decay of the very bodies we inhabit, would not sanction our clinging to the trivial objects which, in life-time, we fancy so much our own.

It was a chilly day in January which she devoted to the task. The landscape without, under the influence of a black frost, looked like a vast burial ground; while the sky and atmosphere were obscured by impending snow. How desolate seemed the deserted chamber she was compelled to visit! How sad it was to be opening, one after another, the depositories of the kindly soul whose hoards had been so few; and so little cared for, except as a resource for others still poorer than herself.

There was but one drawer of the wardrobe kept locked; one which Tiny never remembered to have seen open, and of which she now found the key labelled and deposited in the innermost recess of Mrs. Corbet's bureau. This, even now, she hesitated to open; and was on the point of going in search of her father, to refer the question to him; when, recollecting his earnest entreaty that he might be spared all participation in the task he had besought his daughter to undertake, she took courage. Greatly to her surprise, she found, on opening the drawer, that it contained several sealed parcels addressed to herself; carefully preserved among

strips of Russia leather and bags of lavender, and formally inscribed as — “The property of Sophia Corbet.”

Besides a small jewel-casket, there was an old-fashioned red-morocco desk, with several Indian cerecloths containing cachmeres and valuable point-lace evidently derived from the Rawdons, and scrupulously preserved for Sophia Corbet the younger, to pass into her hands on her marriage, or on attaining her majority.

The jewel-box, of which the dainty gold-key was in the lock, contained some valuable diamonds, and a string of pearls of great beauty and value. Not family jewels of the Rawdons of Heckington, which were heir-loom, and deposited with the trustees; but a bequest inherited by Mrs. Corbet from a wealthy godmother, a collateral of the family, and, as personalty, the legal property of her husband.

More than once during her grandmother's lifetime, Tiny had been questioned by Mrs. Rawdon as to what had become of these jewels; and on her professing entire ignorance, she had been hurt by the old lady's bitter rejoinder of — “Presented, of course, by Henry Corbet to his second wife; or, more probably, sold to defray the expenses of his beggarly household.” — And now that she saw with her eyes the beauty and value of those pearls, and knew, by her recently-acquired insight into the family affairs, to what shifts her poor father had been driven for money, and had yet spared the deposit which he chose to regard as her rightful inheritance, she

not help feeling that the son of the Grenfield and the daughter of the Grenfield curate had nobler and more delicate in their generation than the grandees of Heckington Hall.

Without dwelling a moment on the beautiful work of the old-fashioned bouquet and stomacher of the dresses, and the lustre of the oriental pearls, — objects which the opulent classes of England used to invest their surplus wealth, before they adopted their present passion for gilded furniture and tawdry bric-a-brac — she determined that if, in the course of the years still to elapse of her minority, she encountered any difficulty on the part of her guardian in requiring pecuniary advances, these jewels should be sacrificed to the benefit of the generous father to whom they rightfully belonged.

At the desk, — the desk, open, like the jewel-box, inscribed with her name, — what was to be done? When the last drawer had been emptied, when the waiting servants had been called in, and with suit-objections requested in Mr. Corbet's name to take possession of the wearing-apparel of her to whom they were so zealously devoted, Tiny hastened from the room, the very atmosphere of which seemed to cut cold to her heart, and deposited in her own the treasures which she had so unexpectedly come into possession of. At the rich shawls, — not the Alençon lace as fine as spiderweb, — not the diamonds and rubies, and iris-

tinted pearls, — for no one stood less in need Sophia Corbet, of the Scriptural injunction — “heed, and beware of covetousness.” But it seemed by contact with these things, the unknown mother whom she had thought so often and so often been bidden to talk, were suddenly restored to her. In desk, were several old-fashioned pocket-books of qu silk, containing journals and personal memoranda; — one of them fancifully worked in straw, were several locks of hair. But the chief contents were papers packets of letters carefully tied up, — addressed various handwritings, and ink so faded as to be all illegible, to “Miss Rawdon, Heckington Hall.”

The whole history of her mother’s girlish life served as in amber!

Perhaps it was the powerful scent still exhaling from a little pierced ivory ball, full of musk, sickened the heart of poor Tiny. Or was it the overpowering consciousness that she was invading sanctuary of the grave? —

CHAPTER XIII.

ARE that her father had undertaken a long ride in
to leave her free for the business of the morning,
Corbet, securing herself from intrusion, began with
eyes to examine the papers. 'The two or three
that met her eye, were formal birthday congratu-
or exhortations addressed by her grandfather to
the daughter in large round characters, calculated
the eye of a child. Next came a more voluminous
— the handwriting of which, bore about the
degree of similitude to that in which her father
signed his cheques, or receipts, or rare epistles to
as the impassioned Henry Corbet of twenty, to
the man of fifty-two.

low and unsightly as they now were, — ragged
and faded, — they were the intermediaries of
the courtship which had wearied away the youth
of Maria Rawdon of Heckington. They were the letters,
for and waited for, and eventually smiled or wept
— day by day, week by week, month by month,
the best years of her wasted life. — With
her hands did her daughter lay them aside. There
came a time for remitting them to the hands of
her. At present, his grief for the mother of

Alfred and Edgar was too recent to be carried back an earlier source.

But what came next? — What was the origin of this bulky packet of letters written on the huge quires of blue wirewove, in use forty years ago; sealed with a huge seal, almost large enough for a borough-corporation, engraved with a snaky-looking initial and portcullis crest, such as she had noticed on the family-plate and chariot-rail of her aunt Jane? Though addressed to her mother, it was not in Mr Enmore's cramped handwriting. The characters were bold, rampant, defiant, — characteristic of the hot-blooded Creole she had heard described in Regina Enmore. That the letters were from *him*, she doubted not, even before the first was unfolded and its signature verified; and she no longer hesitated to read them, trusting she might thus attain some insight into the origin of the family antipathies so feelingly hinted at by her stepmother.

The dates were the first thing that excited her surprise. When the first was written, Sophia Rawdon must have been several years younger than she was herself at that moment, — long previous to his union with her sister Jane; and it was addressed to her, not at Heckington Hall, but at Higham Grange, where her parents seemed to be on a visit; young Enmore himself being a guest at Turberville Abbey! —

Still more astounding than this curious concatenation

of events, was the fact that the first letter contained a passionate declaration of attachment! — Before the second was despatched, the enamoured young Creole seemed to have been driven to distraction by Miss Rawdon's assurance that it would be useless to apply to her father for permission to address her, her affections being irrevocably pledged to another. But this prohibition seemed only to have stimulated his frantic passion. He supplicated, — he threatened, — he stormed. He assured her that time must and should modify her sentiments. He was resolved, he said, to follow her home into Hertfordshire, and try his fortune with the fellow, whatever he might be, who had forestalled him in her favour.

Whatever may have been her answer, his intentions were evidently carried into effect. Established in the neighbourhood of Heckington, he waylaid her, beset her, and had no difficulty in mastering the young girl's secret.

"That you should prefer to me an untaught boor, like Henry Corbet, the son of a mere yeoman who in his home at Grenfield is scarcely able to afford bread to his beggarly children, does indeed add to the poignancy of my disappointment," said the following letter. "But beware! — Be warned! — To such a match, Sophia, your prudent parents will never yield their consent; and if you persist in not answering my letters, it is to *them* I will at once appeal, and confide all I have discovered concerning your clandestine meetings with Henry Corbet."

To so insulting a letter, no one would have replied

but a weak-spirited girl of scarcely eighteen. Miss Rawdon was in great awe of her father; and trembled, moreover, lest the base espial and betrayal of young Enmore should prove the cause of some fatal quarrel. But letters of remonstrance and entreaty served only to flame the young barbarian, whose selfish passion left room in his heart for mercy.

Burning with indignation, Tiny could not but wonder how *she* should have borne such letters as those which ensued: coarse and brutal, yet burning with a frenzy of love, compared with which, every other in the collection seemed tame and frigid.

And this enamoured ruffian was the husband of Mr. Enmore: — this, the father of Arthur and Willy! —

The progress by which he attained these qualifications, was only too grievously demonstrated in the succeeding letters. Reginald Enmore had married not from love, — but hate! — After drawing down upon “idolised Sophia,” the resentment and interdiction of Mr. Rawdon, by rendering others the medium of acquainting the proud family with her engagement to the “yeoman’s son,” and still finding her, though forbidden to see or communicate with young Corbet, insensible to his detraction, he turned upon her as a bitter enemy. As the surest means of ruin to her prospects, he came forward as the suitor of her sister, a girl scarcely out of school-room; and as his fortune was considerable, his person attractive, and his court, both to Jane Raw-

and her family, abjectly assiduous, his suit was crowned with success.

In vain did poor Sophia argue with her young sister against uniting herself with a ruffian. The marriage was hurriedly accomplished; and almost before they quitted the altar, Enmore contrived to whisper to the pale trembling sister-in-law who was officiating as bridesmaid, that his sole object in the match was to secure the means of vengeance; that while he lived, she should never become the wife of Henry Corbet, or inherit the lands of Heckington; — that his hatred should pursue them, even beyond the grave!

These inhuman menaces were renewed in the letter which announced to her that an heir was about to be born to Heckington; — and that he loathed her sister as much as he still loved herself. And with this terrible consciousness weighing upon her mind, was it wonderful that poor Sophia Rawdon wasted into the shadow of her former self; that, beset by terrors, and wounded in her tenderest feelings, she faded year by year under the harsh governance of the parents, continually irritated against her by the malicious representations of her brother-in-law? — When at length the death of his yeoman father enabled the warm-hearted young fellow so stigmatised by Enmore, to offer her a humble home, it was an ailing, broken-spirited woman he transplanted as his wife to Grenfield House! —

But the evil was not at an end. On finding his

father-in-law, disgusted by his jealous, violent temp gradually mollify towards the husband of his el daughter, even so far, it was said, as to have execut a will in favour of her posterity in case she should gi an heir-male to the property, Reginald Enmore, unat to bear the sight of the Corbets' restoration to favor suddenly discovered the necessity of establishing his f mily at Fredville. West Indian grievances were begi ning to be heard of, sufficiently to afford a plea for to menting the old Rawdons by the removal thither of the idolised grandchildren.

He wanted to punish their toleration of Sophia ar her husband. But this was not enough. It was th heart of Sophia herself he wished to wound. And whe on the death of her father, shortly afterwards, accel rated, it was supposed, by the grief of losing sight of th little fellows of whom he was so proud, the Corbe came into possession of Heckington, he addressed a far well letter to Sophia, — the last of the collection whic was now in the hands of her daughter, — malicious threatening both herself and her expected babe. would never, he assured her, see the light. — Banqu issue should never reign in Heckington, even if murd were the price of their extinction!

As far as dates could determine the question, th terrible letter, received on the eve of her first confir ment, was likely to have originated the death of th *little brother*, which Tiny had heard described by t

and mother as the result of her poor Sophia's precipitate removal to Heckington; — a loss doubly painful to its parents, as that of a first-born child, and the heir to such considerable possessions.

If ever again Reginald Enmore ventured to address his gentle victim, the record of his cruelty was not preserved. The following year, after giving birth to her daughter, poor Sophia sank into the grave! —

"Poor Sophia!" — Ay, worthy indeed of the designation: miserable in her destinies, — miserable in her inability to contend against them. — Her daughter, as, with folded arms and tears streaming down her face, she paced the very room which had perhaps witnessed a portion of her griefs and terrors, could scarcely refrain, even while her heart swelled with indignation against the persecutor, from deploring the weakness of the persecuted. Had she only possessed the courage to brave and denounce him! — Had she only dared the conflict and its consequences! —

Alas! how many, how *very* many, if they "only dared," would become great and good, instead of wretched! —

But as her anger and tears subsided, poor Tiny was forced to admit that, a year or two before, she herself should have succumbed under the enmity of one so unscrupulous as Reginald Enmore. It was only lately she had begun to think and feel with energy or independence. *Had not even her powerless aunt held her in durance?*

— Was she not, even now, afraid to address a letter to her cousin Willy? —

For the examination of the few papers remaining on the desk, she had not spirits. Hastily committing the whole collection to its keeping, as to a family fault which it had been long buried, she tried to calm down her feelings to meet her father with decent composure at the dinner-table; bathing her swollen eyes again and again, that their redness might not attract the attention of little Edgar. But a thorn was in her heart; a thorn whose rankling would tend to promote that maturer character which was converting an amiable girl into an earnest, steadfast woman.

Though the sorrows and alarms which preceded her birth had tormented her unknown mother, yet her thoughts ascendant in her mind, two surmises occurred which afforded painful grounds for reflection: that the woman who had so conscientiously abstained from touch with jewels and woman's gear under her charge, virtuous in her own way, had also refrained from opening the family to her father she scarcely doubted. But unless Mrs. Corbet had her insight into Mr. Enmore's character from her correspondence with her ill-fated predecessor, how was it to be accounted for? — Was it her husband who prompted that death-bed warning against further connection between the families? — Was the father so recently so unapt to revert to the past, still br

trongs of which, during his married life, he had probably become cognizant? —

On the other hand, as regarded the offender himself, had the passion of this hot-headed Creole been pure and genuine? Or in seeking so wilfully her mother's hand, had he, in the first instance, addressed himself to the heiress of Heckington, rather than the gentle Sophia Rawdon?

Alas! did not that mere misgiving afford evidence of the taint of Rawdon blood in the veins of poor little Tiny? Was not what Willy was pleased to call Rawdon-of-Heckingtonism, apparent in the conjecture?

When she and her father met at dinner, — a meal to which the slender frugality of Grenfield rendered cheerful conversation an indispensable garnish, — the poor girl exerted herself to the utmost to meet him with a brightened countenance.

But, on Mr. Corbet's part, no such effort was needful. Whatever might have chanced during his absence, or whomsoever he might have met at Hertford, where he professed to have gone on business to the County Bank, he returned an altered man. His eye was bright, his brow unknit. His words came trippingly from the tongue. Grief might still be in his heart, but there was no vestige of it in his deportment.

Almost before dinner was over, he sent away little Edgar; bribing him to a quiet departure by the promise

of a pair of skates for the morrow, and a promise that the ice on the fish-pond should be swept for his use.

"Where do you think I have been, Tiny?" he said, as soon as the delighted boy had whistled his way up to his school-room.

"To Hertford — you told me this morning; — on business."

"Ay, but when I left you this morning, I had little thought what business it was to prove. A week ago, my dear, I got a letter from a London solicitor, addressed to 'Grenville Lodge,' acquainting me that, as he was uncertain of my address, I should find a communication lying for me at the Hertford Bank. Now, I am not fond of solicitors' letters; least of all when they call them 'communications.' I've had too many in my time, and seldom found 'em agreeable. When people have anything pleasant to say, they *come*, they don't write. So I laid the letter by, and thought the errand might wait. — I knew I should be forced to go to Hertford at Assize-time, and then meant to call at the Bank."

Another sad token of her father's habits of procrastination, and want of moral courage! —

"But last night, when what we were talking of made me feel I should be glad to be absent from the house for a few hours, and that you'd be glad, perhaps *to get rid of me*, I bethought me of the letter from John Meriton, junior, of Barnard's Inn, and away I went."

Hertford; though, as you may have noticed, in no very enviable frame of mind."

"And I hope you found, dear papa, that some distant relation, or unknown benefactor had left you a fortune; and that the packet was full of thousand-pound notes?"

"No, my dear. Such things occur in novels, not in real, every-day life. Even when a fortune *is* left, it is usually encumbered with some hateful condition, or a heap of mortgages, which render the bequest a curse. The only papers ever forwarded to me through a banker were protested bills, or Exchequer writs, or some other abomination."

"The tone of your voice does not announce that you found anything of *that* description at Hertford," said Tiny, a little anxious that he should come to the point.

"Did you ever hear, my dear, of a relation of your mother's, named Lucretia Rawdon?"

"I know her well. I used to see her at grand-mamma's, and I saw her again last year in Hertford Street. But surely it is not poor cousin Lucretia who has died, and left you this encumbered estate? She always passed in the family for the poorest of poor relations!"

"The busiest of busy ones, at all events. Not dead, by any means; and, as you say, with no estate to dispose of; though she has been meddling and making to *obtain for me the custody of one.*"

"Heckington, of course! — Heckington is the life of her life!" —

"Not the *dream*, I should think; for it seems the lady never rests! — For some time past, she has been besetting the trustees of the Rawdon property, acting at the suggestion of one of your cousins, who, having been roughly answered by them or the trustees, ended by petitioning the Chancellor, and was referred to the Master, to whom the estate was entrusted at the time of the Enmore suit. Her memorial, or what is called, stated that the house was going to ruin, — that the agent appointed by the trustees neglected his duty, — that a Commission ought to be taken of the spot, and verify the truth of her statements."

"And is all this to be attended to?"

"It has been already done; and the Master has refused to admit that the interests of the minor and the estate have been shamefully neglected."

"So I had already heard from Willy Enmore that it is no affair of ours."

"I beg your pardon, my dear. It is very important affair. Not only from the interest I must ever take in the spot so dear to your poor mother. But if anything happened to your two cousins while still unmarried to you, at the death of both, would revert the estates."

"A somewhat remote contingency, papa!"

Miss Corbet, with a deep blush. "Two healthier, heartier young men than Arthur and Willy, do not exist."

"Life and death are in the hands of providence, my dear. There are such things as accidents; — precipices to fall from, — seas to drown: — especially for two such hot-headed individuals as your cousins."

"In short, papa, you think me in great danger of becoming an heiress!"

"I wish I did. Nobody would turn her money to nobler account; though maybe I should be having you turn Pharisee on my hands, and build a church or a county-hospital, before the year was out!" —

"But what has the Lord Chancellor or the Master in Chancery, or whoever has the Custody of Infants and the care of Heckington, decided about the matter?"

"What they usually decide, — nothing! — I sometimes think it is intended as a punishment to those who make out-of-the-way wills and endeavour to govern their property from one generation to another, that it is sure to be melted away in the burning fiery furnace of the Law. — Well, my dear, — for I see you are impatient for the kernel of the nut, — all this has ended in an application to me, — an official application from the Master, — to know whether it would suit me to undertake the custody of the property till the death of Mrs. Emore; — to reside either at the mansion or Northover Farm, with a stipend of five hundred a-year, and a *quarterly audit of my accounts.*"

“Reside at Heckington?” — repeated Miss Corbet faintly, — almost overcome by so singular a turn of fortune. —

“Or at Northover, which, being at present unoccupied, I might farm for my own benefit. — What say you, Tiny?” —

“That you are more independent here, inhabiting a house of your own.”

“Inhabiting a house which, small as it is, I scarcely the means to keep up! — You must perceive, Tiny, by what you have lately accomplished, how I and my poor wife have been pinched. — Five hundred a-year stipend is a temptation to a poor man with a couple of growing boys to be cared for.”

“Certainly, certainly, — if it can be obtained with honour. But surely, papa, Arthur Enmore himself might be glad to reside at the Hall, on such an advantageous chance?”

“The Master may not consider a man of twenty, sufficiently experienced for the custody of property in which, at present, he has only a life interest. Nor, if as people say, he is engaged to be married to one of those giddy Horsfords, is he likely to desire to devote himself to the improvement of the estate.”

Against this proposition, Miss Corbet had nothing to offer.

“And what have you decided, papa?” she inquired after a deliberative pause.

"In the first place, my dear child, *your* wishes, so long as you reside with me, will have a leading influence over my decisions. In the next, it will be better for us to visit Heckington together, and determine, on the spot, into what state of degradation the poor old place has fallen. — It would be mortifying, Tiny, — it would be humiliating to both of us, — if it proved so decayed and degraded, that nothing we could do, on our limited means; would enable us to raise it to its just level in the county. — If we are to live there as mere agents, — keeping brick-and-mortar together, and preventing the thistles in the shrubberies from overtopping the evergreens, we had best stay at Grenfield House."

Miss Corbet, to whom Grenfield House had not presented itself, that day, in its cheeriest aspect, replied faintly in the affirmative. She was secretly wondering whether a letter from her hand could reach Fredville, and obtain an answer, before her father was required to give in his ultimatum to that mystery to eyes profane, — that Eidolon to even the best initiated — Chancery, by itself, CHANCERY.

CHAPTER XIV.

It was a comfort to Miss Corbet that, Alfred having returned to Aldenham after his holidays, her father did not propose that the younger boy should bear them company in their visit to Heckington. In such an expedition, she wanted to be alone with one who had known and cared for her mother. Though far from a man of exquisite sensibility, the "yeoman's son" felt warmly and honestly, and would enter kindly into her feelings.

Estates and mansions left to be deliberately devoured by the gnawing tooth of a Chancery suit, are now, happily, of rare occurrence in our trimly island. In my childhood, and within range of my own country-home, I remember more than one reduced to a perilous condition: the tileless roofs, mere skeletons; the decayed floors pervious to a feruled walking-stick; the ceilings transparent as cobwebs; the chimneys blocked with jackdaws' nests; — enjoying the worst reputation, as haunted by ghosts; and fully deserving that of affording an unmolested retreat to vermin and reptiles.

Now, it is difficult to find a deserted house or abandoned pleasure-ground. The lover of the picturesque must content himself with admiring such scenes on canvas, or in letter-press. Heckington, however, has

yet reached its last worst stage of degradation. For years past, ever since the property was thrown into bankruptcy, a decent allowance had been assigned for keeping it up;" and though this operation does not, in the eye or ear of the law, include the weeding of gravel-walks, the pruning of ornamental shrubs, the sowing of annuals, or heating of hot-air stoves, to render superlatively habitable a home without inhabitants, there were no gates hanging loose on their hinges, and no pigs running loose in the parterres. — Even this was more than Mr. Corbet had expected.

He had never set foot in the old place from the period of Mr. Enmore's return from the West Indies. Though aware that, abandoned as it was, it might be visited without hindrance, the distance from Grenfield rendered it out of reach of his pony; and a day's absence from home was a serious loss to the tender husband and careful husbandman. — Even now, though he had borrowed Dr. Ashe's solid old phaeton and mare for the expedition, the poor animal gave signs, long before she approached the Lodge-gates, that, having no particular interest in the estate, she found the journey a little too much for her.

Scarcely, indeed, had they reached half-way, when she was sufficiently distressed to excite the pity of the tribe of Horsford, whom they met in full force on their way to a neighbouring Meet; the daughters in an open *brèche*, with two strangers equipped for hunting in

the back-seat, and one of the young Horsfords on the box, by way of chaperon. As no formal, black-edge card of "return thanks" had at present been issued from Grenfield House, the Cleveland family had judged it either not decorous or not necessary, to call there on their return from Somersetshire. Since they quitted Higham Grange two months before, they had been on what polite newspapers term "a tour of visits" in the parish; that is, they had been spunging in all the houses of mark and likelihood on their road back into Herefordshire, whose owners had even vaguely uttered to them that specious phrase of social swindling — "Should you ever come to my part of the country, it will afford me much pleasure to see you."

Of their movements and progress, therefore, Miss Corbet was wholly ignorant; nor could she satisfy her father's surmises concerning the two young men arrayed in knowing hunting-frocks and top-boots, who notwithstanding the care she took to let down her black crapo veil before the approach of the well-known Cleveland carriage, stared her out of countenance, while she returned the friendly salutations of Flo. and Carry.

"Good-looking young fellows, both, though tolerably self-assured," was Mr. Corbet's sentence on the strangers: "particularly the one sitting opposite Florence Horsford. Fine face — showy figure."

His daughter could honestly say that she had been too much occupied in kissing her hand to her you

ends to notice the sportsmen. But she *had* seen the pertinent smile with which Miss Horsford recognised the doctor's old-fashioned equipage; and observed a whisper ~~was~~ between Carry and her opposite neighbour.

In five minutes, however, the encounter was forgotten. After Mr. Corbet had observed that the young men had got a capital scenting-day, and that, the weather being so fine, there would probably be a full meet, the object of their own drive took exclusive possession of mother and daughter.

By the first aspect of the Hall, Tiny was more disappointed than she would have liked to own. She had dwelt upon it so often since in early girlhood she last inhabited the place, and had listened to the exaggerated reminiscences of Lucretia Rawdon and her aunt, till she had begun to fancy it a palazzo; and the first thing that now struck her was the disparity between its proportions and extent. — The Jacobean architecture of the old black edifice seemed ill-adapted to an ordinary family house; and the ivy which still here and there mantled the walls, having been partially destroyed at different periods of reparation, gave it a mean and patchy look, instead of the venerable aspect which ivy, if left to itself, is sure to produce. Grass was springing between the loose stones of the porch and its pierced balustrade. But this was less unsightly than the weather-stained complexion of the stones themselves, green and slippery ~~was~~ damp.

Nothing could be more dreary than the spot, as met Miss Corbet's eye, as she waited under the porch, while her father drove round to the stables, in hopes of finding somebody to take charge of his house — those stables so well-filled and cared for, during his own short masterhood of Heckington! The tile-drains of the park being blocked up or broken in, the whole of the lower grounds had become a swamp: and, let off to neighbouring graziers, were in many places trampled into mire, — in all, rough, rushy, and neglected. Fenced off into pastures with the roughest hurdles, looked more cheerless than a positive waste.

"Not exactly high-farming, hereabouts?" said Mr Corbet, on his return; for, though far from a fancy agriculturist, he remembered how proud old Rawdon had been of his turf and trees; and the bright February sun which was now shedding a sort of glory over the distant hills, and waking up the bleating of the snow-white lambs with which the home park was studded, seemed to place in more miserable relief the neglected condition of the place.

"I will leave you to make the round of the house with this person," said he, after introducing to his daughter a peevish little old woman, encumbered by a heavy basket of keys, "while I proceed to the farm. If I find Northover likely to interest you, I will come back to fetch you to pay it a visit."

Though somewhat disappointed by this arrangement

poor Tiny, as usual, resigned herself. She had hoped he would point out to her the rooms formerly inhabited by her mother, and the scenes of her customary haunts and occupations. But since it was clear, from his avoidance of the house, that he had not courage to confront these affecting recollections, or the sight of the family-pictures *she* was all eagerness to examine, she prepared herself to rest content with the company of the sulky-old woman.

And thus, embellishing his absence by the ennobling motives with which amiable natures are apt to enhance the conduct of other people, she left him to the fulfilment of his real purposes; *i. e.* the examination of the roof, rafters, floors, sheds, and granaries of Northover.

Considering the account she had received from Willy Enmore of the dampness and chilliness of the Hall, when visited in the dog days, Miss Corbet was a little surprised to find it comparatively warm and airy. But though this was in some degree the result of the difference produced by transition, in summer and winter, from the warm or cold external air, as we find in visiting any great church or public building, it was chiefly attributable to the fact that the shutters of the suites of rooms were unclosed, and the doors standing open.

"Perhaps you were expecting my father?" she said to her grim companion. "Perhaps Mr. Meriton or the trustees wrote to announce us? — You seem prepared for visitors."

"And well I'd need," was the muttered rejoinder. "There's always somebody or an-another coming a-bothering. I told the gentleman yesterday, I'd rather give up the care o' the place, for which ten shillen' a week is bare pay, than be continually ansering o' questions, and then being called over the coals for my anwers."

"Mr. Meriton, then, has been here?"

"I don't a-know strange folks's names — not I. I was put in by the lawyers" — (she pronounced the ominous word "liars") — "and that's enough. Last hay-time, there com'd a young gent, as went rampaging about the place like a madman, wiping the picturs with his han'kercher, and tearing down the plants in the garden, as if he were master or more. And though I did my best to obleege him, and he guv' me a handsome token in acknowledgment, what does he do but goes straight to town and lodges a complaint that the house is neglected, and that me and my husband ought to be turned out, neck and crop."

That such was the result of her cousin Willy's visit, was no great surprise to Tiny. Still less, to learn that, shortly afterwards, arrived a fussy, grumbling, chattering, mischief-making old lady; who insisted on poking her nose into everywhere and everything, and could not keep her hands off the furniture, because, as she declared, she was a blood-relation to the family, and had made up her mind to see justice done to all parties.

That this visit of her officious cousin Lucretia, was

the origin of the subsequent commission and the application eventually made to her father, was evident to Miss Corbet; and the arrival of one of the officials legally concerned for the estate, the preceding day, was probably attributable to the slackness shown by Mr. Corbet in making up his mind.

"I haint a-had no time to shut up the house, which the gentleman yesterday made me throw open from ground-floor to garret," growled the old woman. "And now, maybe, because you finds the doors and shutters open, you'll be going and reporting me, as the young gentleman did, and endeavour to get me and my husband turned off."

"We will do nothing unfair or unkind to you, or any one," replied Miss Corbet, who was beginning to tire of her grumbling; "provided you leave me to ramble about the house unmolested. Some day or other, I am likely to reside here; and I am anxious to take a careful view of the house."

"Your gentleman's like to buy the place, then?" inquired the woman, peering into her face.

"*Buy* the place? — *Buy* Heckington Hall?" cried Timy, in a tone of indignant surprise.

"Why, him as com'd yesterday, after turn-up his nose at everything he saw, and using bad language (which I hopes I'm too good a Christian to repeat), said, as he got on his horse to ride away, that 'twas a thousand pities the place warn't sold off at once; — that, as

far as he was concerned, he'd be thankful to wash his hands on't; — and that he wished the Chancellor were forced to live in it, for a punishment, — or some such rubbish."

She spoke to inattentive ears. Miss Corbet had caught sight, in the yellow saloon, of the portrait of the two little girls with their basket of cherries, which had so haunted her memory; and her cicerone, on seeing her seat herself on an opposite settee, as if rooted to the spot, mumbled something about having to attend to her good man's dinner, and the "tatoes a-biling to him, which purported to apologise for abandoning the stange to her meditations.

Thus left to herself, poor Tiny was able to give vent to her feelings. But which way did they tend? — Alas! how seldom do human emotions confine themselves to a single channel! — Is it from the strength or weakness of our nature that we think and feel in a thousand shallow streamlets, instead of condensing the flood of thought or feeling into one impetuous current, sufficient powerful to overcome the obstacles of what we are pleased to call our fate? —

The sympathies of Henry Corbet's daughter were, in fact, pretty evenly divided between the long-lost mother who, in those now deserted chambers, had been persecuted by Reginald Enmore almost to the grave; and the poor little Tiny, who in her white-frockhood had been almost as maliciously tormented by him when he

distinctly did those hollow-sounding rooms bring back to her mind its early impressions: the library, where an *auto-da-fé* had been perpetrated on her favourite doll; — the dark passage, where a black mask and domino had all but terrified her into fits; — the old Chapel, where a speaking trumpet had been put in requisition by her cousin Arthur to simulate the voice of their defunct grandfather, reproving her cowardice from the grave. Her stepmother was right! — An evil-nature had spoken out betimes in those boys. It was best for her that she should never see her dear cousin Willy again.

The recollections and reflections thronging to her heart, seemed to render the stagnant atmosphere of the old house too oppressive to be borne. Leaving the basket of keys to take care of itself, she hurried through the rooms and across the echoing hall, into the air, elastic and warm with the vivifying influences of coming spring. Already, the scent of violets and gleam of snowdrops were perceptible. — But when she reached the well-remembered nook where the Macartney rose-tree was wont to flourish, she saw that not only the upper branches had been rudely torn from the wall, as if to bring down its blossoms; but that the trailing stems to which knots and rusty nails were still appended, had been killed by that frost of the preceding month, to which her brother Alfred was indebted for his first skaits. — The tree was dead. — *Alas! for the omen!* — She now fancied that it

was not only best, but *certain*, that she would never see her dear Willy again! —

Wandering on and on, among the overgrown old-fashioned thickets of yew, or alaternus and ilex, black with age and rusty as a group of seedy curates gathered together by a Visitation, a cheerful clump of mezerion vivid with blossom, occasionally brightened the gloom. The elasticity of the air gradually restored her. It seemed to her, as it has done to many, that nature revives earlier under the shelter of an old Dutch Garden with its cozy nooks and intervening walls. The sweeping lawns of a modern landscape, though charming in their full tide of Midsummer luxuriance, are too open and shelterless for any garden of Eden but that of the foxhunter.

She was not long left to her cogitations. While she stood watching the carp darting about, as of old, in the marble reservoir, as if in chase of the first spring sunbeams, her father's rough arm was fondly laid on her shoulder, and she was told that the "trap was waiting." The two hours allotted for the bait of the old mare, had expired like a moment; and Mr. Corbet was impatient to be off. Charmed with all he had heard and seen, he was in the highest state of exhilaration. —

There are various kinds of amateurship in this world of whimsies. Pictures and sculptures, — gems and fossils, — black-letter editions and antique binding — have their enthusiastic admirers. But a man like the yeoman

son of Grenfield House, was far more likely to be enraptured with all he had been examining at Northover, than by the choicest gallery, library, or museum extant. It was on this model-farm that Mr. Enmore, during his occupancy of Heckington, had expended so large a portion of his fortune. Every modern improvement was there which science has contributed to the destruction of agriculture, since farming became a toy for the royalty and nobility of the realm as well as the means of human sustenance. Not a prize or patent implement but was rusting in its outhouses. — Every species of machine was standing useless in its sheds. — But what outhouses, and what sheds! — What asphaltic pavement, and what enamelled mangers! — Poor Mr. Corbet seemed to regard with envy the beast of burthen or stalled ox, to whom such luxuries were supplied.

The home-staying man had never happened to see these playthings of husbandry, except at an Agricultural Show, or the great Exhibition; and contrasting them with the homely worn-out appliances of Grenfield House, its clumsy plough, and lumbering tools, — its dilapidated cowhouses and tumble-down styes, — he seemed to look upon Northover as the Peri looked on Paradise. With such accessories, he should readily realise a fortune. With such adjuncts, he should carry all the prices of the Smithfield show. The Eidolon of a Heckington ox, to which *the muchlimned* Durham one would be as a

skeleton, already swelled like an exquisite vision before his mind's eye.

"You have determined then, papa, to accept the proposal made by the trustees?" inquired Miss Corbet, as they walked back hurriedly to the stables where the phaeton awaited them: — Mr. Corbet, enlarging as he hurried her along, (for the day was already overclouded,) on the merits of all he had seen, and the miracles he hoped to accomplish.

"Of course I have, my dear. Of course, — of course! — It would be madness to decline. The farm is wrought to my hand. A fortune might be made on such premises."

"But would it not be fairer if the refusal were first offered to one of my cousins?"

"*Why*, Tiny? — As a matter of equity, *your* title to the Rawdon property is as good as theirs. As a matter of law, the custody of the place has been tendered to me by its legal guardians. What would you have more?" said he, as he carefully placed her in the phaeton, after, in the exuberance of his good-humour, over-liberally remunerating the cross old woman and her husband.

"Nothing more. As you state the case, it seems right and just. You are the best judge of such matters. But what is to become of poor Grenfield?"

"It will be easy to find a tenant."

"You did not find it easy, I have heard you say, on a former occasion."

"Ages ago — before you were born, Tiny: when there was no railroad, — when London had not been brought so near us."

There was no occasion for, or rather no possibility of, rejoinder. One of those rattling showers which suddenly obscure the clear blue sky of a spring day, was cutting against their faces, defying the shelter of an umbrella, and glueing down her black veil to the face of poor Tiny. Conversation was at an end. They could only push the old mare into her briskest pace, and be thankful that two hours of discomfort would secure them dry clothes and a warm fireside.

The road lay clear before them. The cottage-doors were closed. The very chimneys had ceased to reek. The poultry, with drooping feathers had retreated to their roosts. The cattle stood elegiacally desponding in the drenched pastures. Not so much as a sparrow on the house-tops!

Near the turn to the Clevelands' Lodge, however, they encountered two draggled sportsmen, wet to their skins, and splashed with mud from the sole of their boots to the button of their hunting-caps; one of whom, as he recognised the wheezing old mare pointed out in the morning by Miss Horsford, vouchsafed a slight salutation to *the driver*.

The Corbets could not distinguish, their faces being bowed down to avoid the pelting rain, whether the young gentleman by whom they were thus scantily patronised, were one of the young Horafords, or some guest visiting at the house.

CHAPTER XV.

THE habitually inert mind of Mr. Corbet was so much excited by the pleasant change in his prospects, that he resolved to complete his arrangements both promptly and in person. He even declined, as an impediment, the company of his daughter; who would fain have visited town for a glimpse of the little Amy Armad, which was already half smothered in muslin and mother-love, in the arms of her friend. He accordingly remained at home to plan and project the removal of their household and household gear; while her father, in the office of the Accountant-General, was taking an oath of his solvency, and signing an agreement for the management of the Heckington estate, and lease of Northover Farm.

For the first of these details, the agreement, stood of force from "year to year, during the lifetime of Mrs. Anne Enmore, widow, formerly Jane Rawdon, spinster, whose decease her eldest surviving son was to come to the enjoyment of the property;" and it was proposed that Henry Corbet, Esq., of Grenfield House, should be placed in possession on Lady Day next ensuing, viz., in three weeks' time.

As he trudged gleefully back to the station with the
Heckington. I,

duplicates of these documents deposited in his inner pocket, the honest man could scarcely believe in his good fortune. It was some drawback that his luck was not shared by the loving wife with whom he had struggled through so many days of neediness. But then came the reflection that it would have been pain and grief to the invalid to quit the Grenfield where she was born, and the shabby old house which was as much a part of herself as the limpet's shell of the limpet.

Towards the middle of the day which Tiny was devoting to the final examination of her mother's papers to which her recent visit to Heckington imparted a double interest, she was startled by the sound of voices on horseback approaching the house. From her room, though the window was open to admit the cheering spring-sunshine, she could not examine the world without being seen; and as she had issued strict orders of non-admission to all and sundry, she was not surprised to hear a discussion arise concerning card-leads.

"Gone to London, eh?" said a voice, which was readily recognised as that of the old squire of Glenlands, who seemed to have partly misunderstood the answer of the flustered maid-servant. And then warranted in regarding Grenfield House as free-quarters, the whole party talked out as freely as if in the Great Desert or the Prairies.

"You must leave a card," said the voice of Mr. Horsford, addressing one of her companions.

"I shall do nothing of the kind," replied the person addressed. "I am here as a stranger."

"Not to say an enemy!" rejoined another. "But as I am neither, allow *me* to show that I have paid my compliments, in person, to Mr. and Miss Corbet."

A sarcastic burst of laughter hailed his declaration; accompanied by remarks and exclamations which were rendered inaudible to Tiny by the stamping of the horses who seemed to take as a signal to themselves the liberality of their riders. — Much would she have given for a peep at the group. But after the announcement of her absence assumed by Mr. Horsford, this was doubly impossible; and she heard them canter off, half-a-dozen in number, laughing loudly, and talking loudly, as a merry country-party of young people are apt to do when enlivened by the first sunshine of the year.

How different the state of *their* spirits from her own, as she hung over those yellow letters, and pondered on her approaching departure from her poor old room! — But there was something in even the mirth of the Horsfords that seemed artificial. They were always acting; — always talking for effect. — *Them* she could never envy, and never love.

The cards were brought up; that of the old squire, with the name of his daughters and Mr. Robert Horsford, inscribed in pencil. The second card explained the familiar voice of the more courteous speaker. — "Mr.

Charles Turberville," — Turberville Abbey had faced to make way for the address of "Clevelanda."

She was both startled and pleased. Since she had left Somersetshire, she had thought little of the guests at Higham Grange. Absorbed as she had in family interests of the most sacred importance, Turberville Abbey had almost escaped her recollection; her interest now revived. The parents of Charles Turberville had come forward so kindly to welcome her that she felt mortified at being unable to requite their attentions by similar hospitality to their son. No, she was in the slightest degree ashamed of the small proportions and establishment of Grenfield. But her father in his broad hems, herself in her mourning both of body and soul, were little qualified to afford entertainment to an inmate of the Horsfords, who had treated all and everything this world contains, as for "chaff."

As to the nameless visitor who had called him "stranger and an alien," he had spoken so ungraciously that she troubled herself little about him; and her father, on his return from town to a late dinner rather early supper, was too full of his morning's actions and the total revolution impending in domestic affairs, to feel interested by the coming of a morning visit. "People staying at Cleveland want of an object for their morning's ride. — What earth could it signify?"

The hundred pounds, almost forced upon him by the cesses. Meriton by way of earnest for their bargain, earned almost to burn in his pocket. He wanted the morrow to dawn, that he might go forth into the village of Grenfield, — pay off his trifling outstanding accounts, and acquaint the strait-coated young Reverence who resided at the parsonage his defunct wide-skirted father-in-law, that, if he heard of a tenant for Grenfield House with fifty acres of excellent land, it was to be had on lease. Could he have followed the bent of his inclinations, he would have slept that very night under the slated roof of the model-farm whose water-courses were clear as the pipes of an organ; whose flues were calculated to warm, boil, and stew, — do everything but smoke; — whose doors had a bifold movement, — whose floors were fire-proof, — whose granaries damp-proof, — whose walls weather-proof, — whose bolts and bars burglar-proof; whose whole structure, in short, was scientifically calculated, that neither moth nor rust should corrupt, nor any enemy break through and steal — save that subtlest of all — DEATH! —

Next day, their preparations began: an endless packing of trunks, nailing of dealcases, matting-up of furniture, cording of chests. Though no inestimable pictures were to be removed, as for the Art-Treasure Exhibition, no rich plate to be embedded in baized plate-rests, or china in bran or sawdust as for the glorification of an Ambassador Extraordinary, a variety of old

change, while the servants assisted in the preparations, or received the sorrowful the poor of the village of Grenfield, inquire into the truth of their Exodus.

Huge unsightly packages were encountered in the passages, — parlour and hall, — — chairs piled up, — tables dislocated and screen-poles tied together, fascis-thing in the dust, litter and misery of the humblest order; — furniture like a sea-see rocking about in cottage-carts. Michaelmas, — the household having gone to Jem Snooks; — when there came a housebell, and a claimant for admission to be denied. — Not a dun, gentle reader, — not a dun, gentle reader. — Harry Corbet had

CHAPTER XVI.

TED indeed looked the cousin with the heroic men admitted into the carpetless, curtainless, and its best days comfortless; and invited by a maid who brushed down a deal table and a sofa with a dirty apron, to "please take a

man — poor child — poor Tiny!" — muttered her, though long accustomed in her own person to bare and meagre accommodations. — "What a shame the daughter of Sophia Rawdon of Heckington. goodness I have done my best to release

well-bred to overwhelm a self-invited visiter with apologies for the short-comings of the house or the weather. Tired, Tiny hastened to welcome her. The fire must be made to blaze cheerfully; and the home-made-churned, and home-brewed set before her, as palatable to a London palate, even had mere fare been wanting.

"Thank you for not bothering me with apologies for my fault of yours," was her hasty reply. "My dear, Tiny; — for I never rested till I got your news of a father translated to a higher see: — so

that the dust, dirt, and disturbance I find you i dear, are all of my making. And thank Mr. Corb for not making a stranger of me, but going to loo his wagons at such a moment, as a family man or

"I was sure you would forgive him. His har just now so full of business!"

"Not half so full, though, as they'll be a m two hence. But I don't forgive you, Tiny, for l so pale and thin. What's come to you, child? — F for your stepmother? Not you! — She was a good I believe. — But when once that's said on her stone, there's an end on't. And girls don't gro and pale now-a-days, when they lose even the r that bore them. Come, speak out. — What's b matter? — Did you pick up a lover down in the to cut out poor Willy? — Or is he at the bottom tears I see rising in your eyes? — Here's yo health, my dear; to ensure which, don't get into of crying for nothing. Before you arrive at my you'll find there's quite enough real trouble in the without moaning over make-believes."

After crowning these homely sentiments by a of homely ale, she patted Miss Corbet on the s as severely as she would have operated on th mastiff at the gate, had he allowed her to approa

"I am afraid you expected to find us already at Heckington?" said her cousin, repressing th which she did not care to hear so roughly interpr

"Nothing of the kind. I knew from the lawyers how your father had kept them waiting; and liked him all the better for not rising like a trout at the first layfly he saw on the water. But as they knew how anxious I'd been all along about the matter, a little clerk in Meriton's office, whom I've made my friend, let me know that the question was settled; and that the custody of the old place had fallen into the proper hands. And so I thought I'd run down and have a look, — not at it — but at *you*. For, says I to myself, I shall read in their faces whether the poor relation may look out now and then for a seat at her great-grandfather's chimney corner, or a bite and sup at his board."

"And what have you read in my father's face?" rejoined Miss Corbet, a little embarrassed, — for his reception, though not cold, had been far from fervent.

"That Henry Corbet will occasionally put up with me, if not too troublesome. He won't, like my Cousin Jane, slam the door in my face, with one hand, and hold out t'other to me with all but fawning courtesy. However, I pity that woman, and overlook her faults. — Poor Jane has been a scape-goat through life. And as every one's hand has been against *her*, no wonder that her hand is against us all."

"Not every one's hand," remonstrated Tiny. "She has nothing to resent against *me*."

"*Hasn't she?* — Then she's more unjust than I fan-

cied; for there's no one against whom she entertains just now, a bitterer grudge."

"Against *me*? — I assure you she wrote very kindly to me, a short time ago."

"There are miles of distance between Jane Emma's heart and voice: — *hundreds* of miles between her head and hand. I never believe half she says, or a quarter that she writes."

"Then how came you to the conclusion that she dislikes me?"

"From her actions. She looks on you as the present cause of dissension betwixt her and her sons; and has made up her mind that, were your home made ever so wretched, if your father were to marry *me*, for instance, or his cook, old Parkins, — she would never afford you a refuge."

"I am not likely to ask her. Thanks to you, Cousin Lucretia, we are about to turn a brighter page in our lives. But I never thought to give her offence."

"Some people *take* it, — whether given or not. For Jane's blood has been embittered in her veins from the hour she was born. Her father forgave his *eldest* daughter for being a girl — because she *was* his eldest, and promised boys to follow. But he never forgave the second; more especially when it proved that she *was* to be the last. — No, — he never forgave Jane, and he could not abide her."

"I fancied that at one time he had made her heiress of Heckington?"

"Only to punish your mother, my dear — whom he wanted to get married in her leading strings and who chose to fancy a man she could not marry till she was old. Admit that 'tis a trial of temper to be made through life the tool of other people's hatred, — the instrument of other people's vengeance! — Jane Rawdon, a pretty girl till mortification froze the blood in her veins, was promoted by her parents only to spite her sister, and married by young Enmore only to spite her sister."

But for Miss Corbet's recent perusal of her mother's letters, how painful a light would have been thrown by this revelation upon her family history! —

"Poor woman! — When I find her cantankerous, I am often more inclined to pity than blame her," resumed Lucretia. "After falling in love with that handsome young savage, and fancying the passion reciprocal, she found he had married her only to injure Sophia — whom, to the last, he loved to distraction; and when poor Jane endeavoured to console herself with her children, and the prospect of their inheriting Heckington, her father played her as false as her lover, and committed an act of death-bed atonement by restoring her inheritance to the daughter he had always preferred. Then it was that her infuriated husband carried her off to live among the niggers; and if half the tales told of *their life at Fredville* be true, beat her to stock-
fish."

"My Aunt Enmore is scarcely the woman to have condescended to complain of his ill-usage."

"Wretched looks — broken health — a humbled spirit, are sad tell-tales. She came back to England an altered woman. She came back trembling at the sound of his voice. Even when he died — died I believe only to get rid of the sight of the wife he loathed, — instead of being enabled to pass the remnant of her days in peace, in the old home so dear to her, — instead of even the prospect of seeing her son installed at Heckington, — the Court of Chancery decided that she must go to her grave before the place could be again inhabited. I often wonder whether this was a concerted vengeance on the part of the old gentleman; or whether he simply wished, by an accumulation of income, to exalt the consequence of his representatives."

"At all events, my poor aunt was the sufferer. As you say, her whole life seems to have been that of a victim."

"Ay, my dear! When I was a school-girl (long enough ago, the more's the pity), and up in my Lem-priere, I used to learn a deal about Nemesis, and families devoted to the infernal gods. But even in Christian times, Tiny, one sees people who seem to have been born under an unlucky planet; — not always grand folks either, or thinking themselves such, like the Rawdons of Heckington. But plain-sailing snobs, — Smiths, Browns

Thompsons, — as cruelly sacrificed as any Thyestes of them all."

"Only that the martyrdom of the Smiths or Rawdons does not seem exactly to engender heroic sentiments. The tribulations of my poor Aunt Enmore have only contracted her mind and narrowed her heart. Yet at one time she appeared to be fond of *me*, — the child of her only sister!"

"*Appeared* to be. — One never knows what she is. I, who am of her own age, and have lived year by year side by side, with her, can scarcely make her out. There are times when I fancy she almost detests her own children: — visiting on them the persecutions of the husband who drove the iron into her soul, just as she visits on *you* the preference of her mother. I verily believe she would gladly have seen you become Mrs. Rawdon of Heckington, had not the old lady projected it."

Miss Corbet sighed deeply. It was painful, it was almost alarming, to be involved in the meshes of so complicated a family feud.

"I know, at least, that she never ceased to beset poor Willy with her hopes that the plan might come to pass. It was one of her alleged grounds for opposing Arthur's engagement to that flashy Horsford girl; though perhaps only she threw over her stinginess a cloak which she fancied dignified and imposing."

"*Do you imagine, then, that she invited me*

Hertford street with the view of furthering grandmamma's intentions?"

"I am not given to imagining, my dear. I don't know how I came to be a stone-wall till I've knocked my nose against it. But I know she was furious, when, just after you were established with her in town, Arthur applied for her sanction to his marriage, — pushed on to the scratch by the people at Clevelands. Not only did she refuse it point blank, but reviled him bitterly for his subversion of the family plans, and declared her satisfaction that never during her lifetime, should he realise his foolish project. I don't know half she said or did; perhaps she scarcely knew herself. But her bitterness decided Arthur to take himself to the continent, under the guidance of his future brother-in-law; and confirmed his animosity to his brother, whom she foolishly cited as the origin of her contempt for the Horsfords. All the old Enmore and Rawdon — Fredville and Heckington — hatred, and thus renewed between those unfortunate boys."

"I almost wish," said Tiny, again heavily sighing, "that my father had not accepted the agency of the property. If it should involve him in disputes with the law, or subject him to offence on the part of my aunt, ~~she~~ ^{he} should be miserable."

"Don't be afraid! Henry Corbet seems a steady going man — neither tetchy nor irascible. Like Tom Thumb, 'he'll do his duty, and he'll do no more;' and *they* don't do theirs, and thank him for rescuing

estate from the hands of the Philistines, the fault lies on their side. Poor old Heckington! — So trim and so fair as it used to be — even in Reginald Enmore's time, — to see it covered with briars, like the field of the sluggard, is really heart-breaking. I wonder what Arthur thought of it?"

"Willy, — you mean. It was my cousin Willy who visited the place last summer," said Tiny, suspecting that poor Lucretia's memory was the worse for her second tumbler of home-brewed.

"I mean what I say, child. I mean *Arthur*."

"But *he* has been on the Continent for the last twelvemonths. Have you forgotten his terrible accident at Interlaken?"

"Have I forgotten my own name? — Or are you really ignorant that Arthur has been living a few miles off, on a visit to the Horsfords?"

"Then *he* must be the stranger who called here with them, ten days ago: — *he* was the foxhunter in the storm!" cried Tiny, greatly interested. "How I wish I had known it! — How I should have liked to see him! — Do you think he is still at Cleveland's?"

"Meriton's clerk told me that he was in town. It was necessary for Mrs. Enmore and her son to appear before the Master, last week, to sign some papers connected with the suit. He told me they appeared to be on unhappy terms. Not more so, however, than they *both* are with Willy. Those three individuals, who ought

to move through life as one, form the equilateral side of a triangle, united only by opposition, or perhaps by pressure from without. But I must be going, 'Tiny.'

"You will not stay and dine with us? — You will not stay and sleep?" added Miss Corbet; — with a very hospitable insistence, however, for she knew the disorganised state of the Grenfield household.

"Dine? — Sleep? — *Where*, my dear, and *how*? — In the coal-scuttle, or the corn-binn? — Well, well! — Don't distress yourself. — I expected no better when I left town. The proof is that I did not bring so much as a carpet-bag, to enable me to stay; and that I ordered the railway-fly to fetch me in an hour or two, to enable me to go. — I heard its rumble at a distance, five minutes ago. So I must come hastily to the real purpose of my visit: — the few last words, which, like the postscript of a letter, contain its pith."

Tiny, who had also risen, was beginning to feel a little nervous; poor Lucretia was fumbling in her pocket apparently for a letter. — It *might* be from Jamaica; for the old lady kept up a close correspondence with her favourite cousin!

Instead, however, of a paper of any kind, she drew from the vast repository into which she had been divining a morocco-housewife or pocket-book; — one of those over-glossy bazaar productions, smelling of turpentine which are inflicted upon good little girls or boys in the

holidays, as the reward of industry. Poor Tiny blushed deeply as she foresaw an impending gift.

"I didn't come down here, my dear," she resumed, "and solely for the purpose of devouring your substance, & worrying you with family quarrels. I came to lend aid towards greasing the wheels of the travel, but I m. — It is I who have driven you out of your quarters, Tiny; and it is my duty as well as my, that re to help you in bearing your burthen. In this, I assist in, se, my dear, you will find a few bank-notes, & I intend to furnish Northover Farm."

"No, no, — I beg and entreat," — cried Miss Corbett, "entirely putting back the pocket-book which Lucretia was endeavouring to thrust into her hand. — "Neither on my mother's account nor my own, must I accept money from you, — money, too, which you can ill spare. — You forget, dear cousin, that poor grandmamma rendered me independent."

"Independent? — Two hundred a year, or thereabouts!"

"It fully suffices my wants. There is not the smallest occasion for me to encroach on your kind and most unexpected liberality."

"Unexpected, I dare say. Poor relations are not reckoned among sources of revenue. But neither you nor I are fools, Tiny, — so don't let us behave as if we were Horsfords. Your mother's kinswoman has a right

to show a kindness to your mother's child, — and her child is bound to show my grey hairs the respect of accepting what I offer. So now, take this book without other grimaces; and instead of thanks, give me a kind adieu." —

While hastily tying her bonnet-strings, she imparted a long kiss on the cheek of the astonished Miss Corbet, picked up her gloves and muff, and was at the door.

But according to her predictions, stood the railway-car. In the course of her startled young relative had recovered her Don't dismount. — Nay, she was gone, and fairly out of left, & paddock-gates, ere Tiny had done more than sink into a chair; less overcome, however, by the surprise of receiving a pecuniary gift from the Cousin Lucretia as often described to her as at once a pauper and car-mudgeon, than by the curious family revelations rattled into her ears.

What a picture of hereditary enmities! — What taste of unchristianly abhorrence! — To what a race of "good-haters" did she belong! — She was almost inclined to question whether the cool, polished, passionless conventional Barton Freres of the human race, — integral segments of the community, who if they feel at all, feel with the million, — might not be safer and pleasanter companions through life than such *Feueryeists* as these hot-headed and hot-hearted Enmores!

"I thought the old lady was never going, Tiny," said

Corbet, on finding, when he put his head into the room, half-an-hour afterwards, his daughter in a brown study, with the pocket-book still in her lap; the fire and their eccentric visitor having both made their exit.

“Poor Lucretia means us well,” was Tiny’s dispirited rejoinder. “She brought us a present, father. But I have not yet had time to examine it.”

The yeoman’s son, aware from sad experience that the presents of spinster poor-relations usually consist in some-knit muffatees, or a bead purse, continued to rumble on; discussing his disputes with stage-carriers and the obstinate waggoner, who would not undertake more than one loaded journey, per diem, between Grenald and Heckington; when an exclamation from his daughter, the most vehement he had ever heard from her lips, suspended his dissatisfactions.

No need to question her concerning the cause of her amazement. She was already extending towards him the little note-case which had enclosed the letter and bank note fluttering in her hand.

“Five hundred pounds, papa! — What can it mean? — Is poor Lucretia out of her senses?”

“If she is, may she never regain them!” said Henry Corbet, with heightened colour and the broadest of smiles. — “But what indication of lunacy is there in her letter or conduct? — She says here, that, as her nearest of kin, she always intended to bequeath you at her

death, the savings of her income. -- And that, feeling herself to be the cause of our expensive migration, she prefers giving them to you *now*, that you may suitably furnish the abode she has provided for you. Good sense, Tiny, as was ever printed in a book; and a plaguy deal more consideration than is usually shown on such occasions. Long enough before my sister-in-law Enmore would have warmed up into such an act of generosity!"

"And I, who so ungraciously rejected her gift!" exclaimed Miss Corbet. "But do you really think, papa, we ought to accept it?"

"Certainly — unquestionably. There is as much generosity, Tiny, in knowing how to accept a gift, as in bestowing one. She would be mortified if you declined what she has calmly and deliberately offered, and came far to tender in person. It is, perhaps, partly a matter of family pride. Lucretia chooses that Heckington and its agent should be looked-up to. She wishes us to appear there in a manner to do credit to the family."

Still, Miss Corbet, aware how long poor Lucretia had been undergoing the buffets of fortune, and how sparing was her mode of life, could not bear the thoughts of so large an abstraction from her hoard. She remitted the note, however, to her father, to be placed to his credit at the county-bank; and forthwith addressed a letter to Lucretia, expressing her fervent gratitude without suppressing her qualms of conscience.

ie answer was: —

IN,

“Accept without demur. Or expect no further
e from that withered stick of the old family fagot
ckington —

“Yours to command,
“L. R.”

CHAPTER XVII.

THREE months had elapsed. The Corbets were comfortably installed at Northover. Had the yeoman's son been endowed with the boss of marvelousity, he would perhaps have believed that he need only desire to see rice sprouting in his fields instead of corn, or bustards winging their way over them instead of Royston crows, to find the miracle accomplished:—so singular were the incomings of wealth showered upon his head since the loss of his poor Mary! Luckily, his jogtrot habits of body and mind remained unaltered by unwonted prosperity; and he continued to busy himself with his pigstyes and cow houses, — his malt-mills and chaff-mills, — as eagerly as though a cheerful, well-furnished drawing-room did not await him on his return from the labours of the farm.

On the other hand, he had been so fortunate as to jump with the opinions of the neighbourhood. Everybody was of opinion that a resident agent was wanted at Heckington; that the Enmore heirs were too young for the office; and that, if the Court of Chancery had gone about Diogenes-wise, seeking with a dark lantern for an honest man and good farmer, its choice could not have fallen more judiciously than on Henry Corbet.

Grenfield. Seldom does Chancery — a dog with an especial ill-name — obtain such unanimous applause.

If, on the contrary, the Grenfield family had indulged in the ambition of establishing themselves at once at the Hall, furnished to their hand, and likely to be benefited by occupation, the neighbourhood would probably have set up its back. But they came humbly, — they came to the farm, — they came in deep mourning and a borrowed phaeton; and everybody received them with open arms. It would have roused the utmost indignation of Mrs. Horsford of Cleveland, could she have examined, at the close of a month, the collection of visiting cards left at their door; — not deposited, as in her own case, for display, in a gorgeous Dresden dish, but collected in a homely wicker basket. Heckington had been five years unoccupied. It was a pleasant relief to the neighbouring families to see the hedges once more pleached, — the water-ways once more fluent, — the lodges once more exhibiting life and liveliness; — their gardens dug up and cultivated, and their China rose trees nailed to the trellises. — Till Henry Corbet took possession of Northover, it was as if the body of a Rawdon, waiting for interment, were lying dead at the Hall.

And now there was a general revival. A sufficient portion of Lucretia's generous gift had been devoted to the purpose for which it was bestowed; and two cheerful receiving-rooms were fitted up with what Henry

Corbet considered luxurious comfort, and in which neither Lucretia nor the neighbours detected the slightest fault.

By the time the old spinster and the summer rose arrived together, Northover was looking as cheery as sunshine could make it; and Tiny, in the discharge of her new duties, looked as womanly and thoughtful as if the delicate bloom of girlhood were not still on her cheek. She had been so busy in assisting her father to place new and active servants in charge of the Hall, from which Northover lay at about half-a-mile's distance, that, till cross-questioned by Lucretia, she was scarcely aware how little she had done in acknowledgment of the attentions of her country neighbours.

"They are all away in London, I believe," was her answer to the spinster's interrogations. "London stretches out its long arm and seizes almost all Hertfordshire, at this time of the year."

"So that you have not yet seen the Horsfords?"

"They left Cleveland directly after we settled here. But dear Amy, who writes less often now that she has her nursery to attend to, has promised to come here for a day, when she visits her family at the close of the session."

"You are a strange child, Tiny," said Lucretia, after scrutinizing her for some moments in silence. "Nothing of the flash girl of the day about you, my dear, — no thing of the fast young lady; or you would have the

Lady Armstead, and been at this moment swallowing the dust in Hyde Park, instead of inhaling the humble fragrance of sweet-briar and honeysuckles. As Willy used to say of you, — ‘God be praised! there is still one good, natural, honest, un-backboarded girl left in the world.’”

“You have so long and so carefully avoided mentioning my cousin Willy to me,” said Tiny, with a blush corroborative of the commendation, — “that I have never liked to ask about him. — But —”

“I refrained from talking about him, child,” interrupted Lucretia, “only because I saw that there was a mutual liking between you, which ought not to be encouraged, because it could never come to good. — The blending of Rawdon and Enmore blood has produced evil enough already: — the only pretext for my cousin Jane’s declaration that she would sooner see her son William in his grave, than married to her niece!”

“Yet you, or some one, told me that she was a party to the wild project of grandmamma to make me, some day or other, Mrs. Rawdon of Heckington!”

“But do people never change their minds, Tiny? Even Jane, with her obstinate thin lips and mulish temper? — During your six months’ stay with her, the qualities which would have softened any other heart towards you, rolled a stone to the orifice of hers. One never knows people till one lives under the same roof with them. She saw, as I do, how, every day, you

grow more and more like that sweet, patient, gentle mother of yours; who, while living, was ever a stumbling-block in her path. — You look like her, speak like her, feel like her; — and every word and smile of yours naturally remind old Jane how she was superseded in the affections of her parents and husband, by the Sophia whose place you are so completely beginning to fill. She witnessed your power of attracting even the most crabbed and unattachable: — her boorish son, — my bearish self. And it seemed almost in self-defence she vowed a solemn vow, that never, with *her* consent, should you become the wife of either of her sons."

Warm and genial as was that summer evening, Try shuddered as if a sudden chill had come over her. She had spent a portion of the afternoon in training and pruning the new shoots of the reviving Macartney race! — Was it to be in vain? —

"Still," said she, in a somewhat tremulous voice, "I don't see why, if forbidden to be in love with my cousin Willy, I may not *love* him, and love him dearly."

"Hush, my dear! If you were really what Willy calls a back-boarded miss, you would die sooner than risk such a distinction without a difference."

"But I am *not*. — Even Willy, you say, admits that I am *not*. — So tell me, like a dear good friend, what have you heard of him? — How is he prospering in the reform of his blacks, and improvement of his estate. —

"e all, is he likely to be displeased at my father's
ment here?"

Too many questions to be answered in a breath,
; and I scarce know which ought to have the
ity. But reply, in the first instance, to an inquiry
ine. Have you positively never heard from Willy
ore since he left London in August last?"

"Not a syllable."

"Then he's a phenomenon, my dear, and you're an-
! If you did not look at me with those eyes as
st as the day, I shouldn't believe you. — But you
it at least from Arthur, when he was staying at
elands, that —"

"When Arthur was staying at Cleveland, I never
uch as saw him."

"He saw *you*, however; for he told his mother you
the sweetest countenance he ever beheld. *That* was
of her grievances. — Arthur, like the rest of us,
enlisted under your banner. But even if you had
and conversed, he was hardly like to tell you how
efully he had behaved to his brother. When Willy
ed off, hot-foot, from London, last summer, and we
abused him for going without a word of farewell,
you still suppose he sailed at once for the West
as?"

Miss Corbet's countenance expressed a decided affir-
ive.

Then you were never more mistaken in your life!

He went straight to Switzerland, — straight to his sick brother; — and it was only because he did not choose to announce his intentions in the family till he knew how his advances would be received, that he left us so ungraciously."

"As if they could be *ill* received at such a time!"

"Wrong again, Miss Tiny! — Instead of receiving with open arms the poor fellow who had hurried a thousand miles or so without stopping for rest, to throw himself into them, Arthur, in the true *Emore* spirit, refused to see him; sent back unopened, to the inn, the letter by which he announced his visit; and informed him that his friend Bob Horsford was all the companion he wanted."

"Poor Willy!" —

"Poor *both*! — The one for possessing too much, the other too little, humanity! All this happened at Lausanne; to which place Arthur had been moved by easy stages for surgical advice. I almost wonder that our dear hot-headed Willy, who had followed him full of kindly yearnings, did not throw Bob Horsford out of the window, or himself into the lake!

"And *I* wonder," added Miss Corbet, in a low voice, "that he did not write me a line, — a single line, — to confide to me his disappointment!"

"He returned straight to London on his way to whatever was his place of embarkation — Southampton, I suppose; — and you were gone; — gone with the arm

steads — gone to mix yourself up with the family to whom he had just vowed eternal hatred and vengeance!"

"But *you* saw him, Cousin Lucretia?" almost sobbed the mortified girl.

"I saw him, — because, even cut up and indignant as he was, his anxiety to know how I had prospered concerning the Heckington agency, induced him to rush off to me for a hurried interview. And I never saw a young fellow so altered! — He was not the same Willy who came back to us from Dresden, my dear Tiny. His eyes were sunk, his countenance was contracted, his face sallow, his voice feeble. — I could scarcely recognise my own dear hearty boy! — He had had a stormy contest with his mother, too; an Enmore contest, — after which, they separated in mutual ill-will. A dreadful thing, Tiny, — a terrible thing, — an unnatural thing, — these contests between parent and child."

"But my aunt was surely not accountable for Arthur's monstrous behaviour?" —

"Willy accuses her as the first origin of their estrangement. By repeating to each the random talk of both, she first created a row. It is never safe to repeat, even to nearest relatives or dearest friends, the things said of them behind their back. Were every one to use the licence, all friendship and affection would be at an end."

"Acquaintanceship — even friendship — might cease.

But brotherlove is too sacred a tie to be so easily severed. Brotherlove is one of the holiest instincts of human nature."

"An instinct, if sacred and profane history can be credited, too often violated. — However, on this occasion, Willy was decidedly on the right side. He had given instructions that, on the attainment of his majority, (next month, I fancy, he comes of age?) a moiety of the Fredville property was to be made over to his brother, and had actually carried over with him to Switzerland the deed of assignment."

"Just what I expected of him!" exclaimed Miss Corbet; "I was certain he would leave nothing for Arthur to complain of, as regards worldly interests."

"Ten to one, Arthur never knew, and never will know his generous intentions," resumed Lucretia. "After the insult offered to him, — (for his letter was returned, with a verbal message, in a public hotel) — the deed was, of course, cancelled. So much the better, however; for, unless Arthur Rawdon can bully or wheedle his mother out of a handsome allowance, that odious Horford engagement must fall to the ground."

"I don't want to hear more about their money disputes, dear cousin," pleaded Miss Corbet. "I want to know about Willy. Have you heard from him since his arrival at Fredville? — Has he recovered his health?" —

"If his health, certainly not his spirits. I have

from him; and low enough he seems, poor fellow! so loving a heart as his, 't is hard to be tossed between such a Scylla and Charybdis as his mother other. But we've talked enough about him now, ar; and luckily, here comes your father to ask for , with a face as long as my arm. — What can matter? One of the Alderney calves has broken , perhaps, or the wheat is showing smut. There ways evils enough in life, Tiny, to disturb our without creating to ourselves imaginary wrongs, s jaundice those of the Enmores."

While the sky of Northover was thus mottled, the here of Higham Grange displayed permanent e. Sir James Armstead had every reason to in the success of his domestic government. Amy, little Amy in her arms, had become the best, as mained the prettiest of wives. Throughout the season, though she accompanied him to such lies as were indispensable to the dignity of his position, all trace of Horsford nature seemed to isappeared from her heart.

; if thoroughly engrossed by a little creature, the of whose muslin robes at present doubled its he could not but miss the society of her friend, Corbet; not only from her kindly cheerfulness, cause her aid had been invaluable in doing the of the house. Tiny was an universal favourite, herself devoid of egotism, was patient with that of

other people; and, not ambitious to shine, was content to listen. The bald-headed coterie was unanimous in regrets for her absence.

Even the Horsfords, who were pursuing their own speculations in a hired house of the shabby-genteel on which house-agents advertise as "fit for the immediate reception of a family of distinction," and a couple pair of job-horses of which one pair halts all day, the other coughs all night, — regretted that Tim had been the object of their jealousy, had declined Lady Armstead's invitations. They had looked to him as a medium of communication with the unapproachable Mrs. Enmore, and perhaps indulged in the paltry vanity of wishing her to see how completely the impressions which Charles Turberville had transferred to Caroline the house which, at Higham Grange, was devoted to herself.

Now that his delicate plant had taken root, and was blossoming and bringing forth good fruit in the happy homes, Sir James was at less pains to extirpate weeds by whose overgrowth he had been threatened the more so, that both the mother and sisters of Anne were considerably subdued in tone by the non-fruitedness of their matrimonial schemes. They had found out that "captains were casual things;" that even so well-planned a siege as, for some years past, they had been laying to Heckington, required too slow a match for their purpose. The adverse decision of Chancery had taken them thoroughly by surprise; nor was there much

at the dry and grudging mother of Arthur Rawdon could make him a sufficient addition to his allowance, justify the fulfilment of their engagement.

The only consolation left to Mrs. Horsford lay in endeavouring to enlist the suffrage of her country-neighbours in behalf of the poor dear injured Florence, whose long attachment to Arthur Rawdon was thus cruelly thwarted; and by representing the Corbets as people who were devouring the substance of her future son-in-law.

With the vague conviction entertained by most ignorant women, that a man high-placed in any department of the state possesses influence in every other, no sooner was she in company with one of the Cabinet-ministers, who appear to be as much the natural growth of Hertfordshire as corn or cherries, than, like the Ancient Mariner, she laid upon him her skinny finger, and unfolded her budget of grievances: — how Chancery held Heckington in its tenacious grip, and how the rightful heir was consequently constrained to remain a bachelor; till the whole neighbourhood of Cleveland was beginning to get heartily sick of the wrongs of Rawdon of Heckington.

CHAPTER XVIII.

MEANWHILE, the startling disclosures made to Miss Corbet by her eccentric cousin respecting the conduct and vexations of Willy Enmore, took such possession of her mind, that to continue silent was impossible. Right or wrong, she determined to write to Fredville. It was due to the only member of her mother's family who exhibited an interest in the destinies of Heckington, to acquaint him with the efforts making by her father and herself for the re-establishment of the place.

That it would afford him pleasure to hear that his own little Tiny was flitting about the old walks, nursing his favourite tree, and even attempting a copy of the "Girls with the basket of cherries," which she hoped at some future time to forward to Fredville for his acceptance, she was firmly persuaded. And exiled as he was, he must be so much in need of consolation! In a noxious climate, among disaffected dependants, with no pleasant recollections to dwell upon than his brother's estrangement, and the harshness of a cold-blooded mother, even a cousinly letter would be acceptable.

She would have given much to speak what she had to write. It was difficult to begin. Quitting her as she *had* done, and never, since, deigning to afford her

st token of remembrance, to frame her letter with self-respect, yet express her warm sympathy in generous intentions towards Arthur, and her indignation at the heartlessness with which they had been treated, was hard to accomplish.

At the moment she put pen to paper, nature prevailed. The ice once broken, the warm under-current of feelings flowed free. She wrote on, and on, — telling him the story of her happy instalment at Heckington and her conviction that, to *his* first move in the world through Lucretia Rawdon, her father was indebted for his present prosperity, and herself for her present occupations.

She needed to follow line by line the artless outpourings of a girlish heart. Without exceeding by a hair's breadth the limits of kinswomanly affection, her words were calculated to fall like dew upon the weary heart of the exile; to whom, by the animosity of his family, wealth was rendered as painful a burthen, as poverty to a great majority of his fellow-creatures. Such a letter was indeed likely to soothe the torrid atmosphere of the exile as deliciously and miraculously as though a new world had expanded in its sky.

But having announced her gift of the picture, it behoved her to hasten its completion. Her copy was in progress; the humble branch of art in which alone her London Street governess had afforded her instructions; and at the conclusion of Lucretia's visit, to enliven

which she had spared no sacrifice of time or occasion she repaired every morning after breakfast to the room furnished with her drawing-materials, and the face of a person intent on a pleasant duty.

One day — one balmy summer day, such as when summer days are at their longest, — she met with most of a light so favourable, to put the finishing touch to her work. *There* stood on the two easels, side by side, the original and the copy; the latter exhibited, of course, less depth of colouring and vigour of outline, but more of that refined expression characteristic of a woman's pencil and of childhood's grace. As she stood for a moment contemplating her performance, a feeling of exultation foreign to her nature, the smile that lighted up her cheek and the tears that moistened her eyes were not the result of self-sufficing vanity. She was thinking of Fredville. She was thinking of the yearnings that picture would create; and wishing to tend to preserve from extinction the strong family traditions latent in the heart of Willy Enmore, which every human being belonging to him seemed endeavoring to extinguish.

The afternoon, meanwhile, was becoming sultry, and, anxious to refresh herself after so sedentary a morning, she placed the easels in safety in their allotted nook, turning the faces of the pictures to the wall; and hurried into the garden to forestall the impending shower. And how fragrant seemed the

phere, and how pleasant the shrubberies, under the pressure of that coming rain, to which nature seems to uplift its incense of thankfulness! — Her whole thoughts intent upon Fredville and the successful accomplishment of her task, — she wandered on, stopping here and there to gather a flower more tempting than the rest, — till her hand could scarcely grasp its truss of roses; without noticing that the thin grey clouds had deepened into slate-colour, and were gradually becoming black and menacing.

By the time the darkness of the sky had driven her back to the Hall, where she had to collect her belongings previous to a hasty walk to Northover, large drops were falling on the white pavement of the doorsteps, now re-laid and recemented. — The hall-door, too, had to be locked previous to quitting the house.

Still holding her roses, she ran rather than walked back to the yellow saloon at the furthest extremity of the suite, whence her drawing-box was to be fetched; still hoping to reach home before the explosion of the storm. — But what was her amazement on perceiving, in the room she had left untenanted half an hour before, a man extended on the sofa, — asleep, or insensible, or dead; — his hat having rolled upon the floor.

Her first impulse was to call for help, — though help was unattainable by the utmost exercise of her voice; — for, burglar, tramp, or corpse, she was clearly unequal to cope with the intruder. A second glance

served to convince her that the stranger, whether sick or sorry, was at least a gentleman; — probably some stranger wandering in the park, who had taken the liberty of seeking shelter from the storm.

If he slept, however, his slumbers must have been light. For on her approach, he started up, snatched his hat from the ground, and without explanation or apology, or even notice of her presence, darted out of the room.

Still agitated by her momentary panic, Miss Corbet could not repress a smile at the superfluosness of her fears; and though the state of the weather was critical, she resolved to give a few minutes' respite, for escape, to the enemy she had overawed by a glance. It was probably some shy country neighbour; or some person who had business with her father, and had blundered into the Hall instead of proceeding to Northover, to wait for Mr. Corbet.

She was still smiling and deliberating, when, through the still open door, the object of her surmises suddenly made his re-appearance, — self-possessed, gentlemanly, hat in hand.

"I have thought better of it, Tiny. It is not thus we should meet or part," said he, extending his hand, which she accepted almost before the conviction rushed into her mind that she was addressed by Arthur Rawdon. "When I came here, I knew your father had ridden to Hitchen; and fancied you had accompanied him."

This unmistakeable hint that he was there only to

so he felt secure from meeting either of them, was rarely gracious. But Tiny could not feel *very* resentful against one whom, at a short distance, it would have been easy to mistake for her cousin Willy; — the same stalwart figure, — the same manly face; only more polished in deportment by the friction of conventional life.

"I would say that I was heartily glad to see you, Cousin Arthur, — though by your own account we seem to meet by mistake," was her spirited reply, — "but that it would be absurd for *me* to be doing to *you* the honours of Heckington."

"I hope, however, that you *will* be pleased to do them," he cheerfully rejoined, as, at that moment, a tremendous gush of rain against the windows denoted that the storm had burst over their heads. — "You are surely not going to turn me out of doors, in weather to which Lear's tempest was a trifle?"

Relieved to find him so pleasantly disposed, Miss Corbet laid down her roses, and moved towards a chair.

"It would almost seem, my dear cousin," he added, not seating himself beside her, but leaning against an opposite chiffonière, — "as if we were to meet only in thunder and lightning and in rain! — Do you remember that fearful downcome, in February last?"

"It was *you*, then, who were accompanying the Horsfords to the Wheathamstead meet?"

"*The Horsfords and Charles Turberville. But my*

visit here, the preceding day, was made alone glory."

"Alas, alas! — You were, therefore, the stranger the very strange gentleman, — who observed that were in his power, he would get rid of every dish of Heckington!"

"*Did I say so? — Likely enough! — For miserably out of temper with myself and the world. And Heaven knows there was at that time nothing in the aspect of the old place to put one in accord with it. — Now, thanks to you perhaps, it is swept and garnished, and beginning to look like a gentleman's residence.*"

"I rejoice to hear you say so. I was afraid I might owe us a grudge for the authority assigned me as father."

"I might as well suppose you still bear me ill-will for my persecutions of ten years ago! I was talking them over, just now on the sofa, when you started from my reverie. But I did not imagine they produced so unfavourable an impression."

"I have fully forgiven the injuries inflicted on my cousin Atty of old times!" she rejoined with spirit. "It is rather the Lausanne companion of Robert I whom I expected to find bitter and unjust."

Arthur Rawdon started; colouring to the roots of his hair.

"Your West Indian despatches, then, have already supplied accusations against my brutality?" said he.

"I have never yet received a line from the West Indies, Arthur, — I wish I had. For poor Willy must be in sad want of friendly correspondence when even his own brother disowns him."

"My dear little cousin," said Mr. Rawdon, admiring her courage, "in family-quarrels, no member of the family can form an impartial umpire. From our cradles, William Enmore and I have been pitted against each other, till we scarcely know each other as brothers. Some day or other, perhaps, when a few more of the mischief-makers are gone to their account, and perhaps when your gentle hand has assisted to root up the briars implanted between us, we may learn to like each other better. But let us talk no more just now of family feuds; or I shall consider this 'dreadful pother o'er our heads' an evil omen."

He might well say so; for the lightning flashed so vividly into the room that, in compassion to the frequent starts of his companion, he hurried to the window, and the spring of the holland blind proving rusty, as is usually the case in uninhabited houses, drew together the shutters: while a heavy peal of thunder seemed to shake the old mansion to its foundation.

"Did you see my aunt Enmore as you passed through London?" said poor Tiny, endeavouring to conceal, by an attempt at conversation, her nervous tremor.

"We have not met for some time," was reply.

"Lucretia Rawdon, then? — The old lady I recently on a visit to us at Northover."

"So much the worse! That woman sows teeth wherever she goes, which rise up *arm* against *me*, and champions of my brother!"

"She naturally prefers Willy, who has b
formly kind to her, and is most in want of frier

"Scarcely, I think! — He has one, at least a host in herself. I heard a good deal of you last winter, down in the West. I have lo
curious to see the little cousin whose dolls I demolish, and who now holds bald-headed states
pert young pamphleteers in her chains! Wh
but, if your sad bereavement had not taken y
opportunely away, my friend Charles Turbervil
not have become my cousin, instead of my b
law!"

"Mr. Turberville is really then to be m
Carry Horsford?"

"If his parents can be brought to consent, still doubtful. *They* do not transfer their affe
readily as their son; and cannot be made to beli
Charles, that one pretty face is as good as anot

"Mr. Turberville was at Cleveland's, I beli
spring?"

"He is there now, — or I should not be "

adulation paid by the whole family to his thousands a-year, drives me out of the house. You know my precious mother-in-law elect, Tiny, and can therefore appreciate the amount of soft sawder lavished on poor Charley."

"I have heard her speak of *you*, Arthur, in terms of the most extravagant praise."

"An age ago, I'm afraid, while she still fancied me entitled to the possession of Heckington; which, as the most considerable place of her neighbourhood, she magnified into a sort of Chatsworth. But it has long played second fiddle to Turberville Abbey, and is often out of tune. Every dog has his day."

His tone was bitter. Bitter had probably been the experience that prompted his remarks. But Miss Corbet, still resenting against him the wrongs of his brother, could not enter into the petty annoyances under which he was smarting.

"So I came to refresh myself among the woods and waters which alone entitle me to think myself somewhat bigger than a midge's wing," he resumed; though unencouraged by a word of reply. "As I was gradually shrinking into nothing at Cleveland, I saved myself from utter evaporation by a brisk walk across the fields, and a glimpse of Heckington."

"And has the remedy succeeded?" inquired Tiny; though the rain, still dashing against the windows, suggested that it was taken at an inauspicious moment.

"Perfectly. I am twice the man I was when I leapt over the hedge from Barnley Lane, and stole a thief into the premises. Memorials of four centuries of Rawdons are calculated to put me into conceit myself; though their faces are torn, and their eyes somewhat mouldy. We beat the Turbervilles, 'Tina, a long chalk! — No hooknosed, Nineveh-eyed villain among *our* forefathers!"

"If we could only leave off thinking and boasting them! —"

"Let me think and boast, then, of the living creature I have found at Heckington, of whom I have reason to be proud" —

"Because she is more patient than in the days you broke her toys, and rooted up her garden?"

"Because she is so different from all I have seen lately. In former days, Tina, when Cleve was on its knees to me, and I was so glad in my holidays to escape from the cheerless home where mother and those confounded janissaries of hers used to dole out my pleasures as if I were a pauper at a table, and they the Master and Matron, — the Horsford seemed angels on earth. But somehow or other, my tumble of mine from the cliff at Interlaken, and my long illness that ensued, shook my perceptions into a new shape. I no longer see things as I used, or people as I used. Everything at Cleveland now appears gaudy, shifting, paltry, like the bits of coloured glass

brilliant in a kaleidoscope, which are still but bits of broken glass."

"But did you expect the optical delusion which created a mosaic of emeralds and rubies vying with the gems in Aladdin's magic window, would last for ever?" said Tiny, with a smile.

"I *expected* nothing; which constitutes, I suppose, that bliss of school-boyhood to which old creatures like Armstead and Barton Frere recur so yearningly. I was simply as happy as a sandboy; and before I came to my sober senses, Tiny, had bartered my birth-right for a mess of pottage; — yes — pledged, in exchange for those worthless bits of glass, the happiness of my future life. — Unequal stakes! —"

"I am not sure that I ought to listen to you," interrupted his cousin. "When the weather clears up, you may repent these confessions. You are in a misanthropic mood just now, because the mercury is low."

"You fancy that when Florence is my wife, I shall like you the less for having confided to you my contempt for the Horsfords? No, no! I shall never confound *her* with the rest of them; not from any vast superiority in her nature, but because she is and must be my own. That, Tiny, is irrevocable. Yonder knights in armour, or prim gentlemen in velvet doublets," he continued, pointing to his Rawdon ancestry, "would disown me for a descendant, if I played fast and loose with a pledge *voluntarily given and often renewed.*"

"Then say no more of it, or *her!*" said Miss Corbet, earnestly.

"Only this — that, as regards such matters as hanging, or marriage, I am as complete a fatalist as a Turk. I have no doubt that, from all time, Flo. and I were destined to each other. And though to you, my kinswoman, — my all but nearest relation on earth, — I describe my boyish entanglement without any flowers of rhetoric, I am still what is called in love. The sweet face which at sixteen I worshipped as that of an angel, I still at two-and-twenty consider the prettiest in the world; and some day or other, perhaps, when we have escaped from Clevelands, I may learn to love my wife as I once loved my love. Don't fix your sedate eyes so gravely on me, Tiny, or I shall fancy you are weighing my sins in the balance!"

What Miss Corbet was really weighing in the balance, was the strange likeness, and still stranger dissimilarity, between Arthur and his brother — "*alike, but oh, how different!*" And in what did the difference consist? — The physical resemblance was remarkable. In frank recklessness of speech, they seemed to vie with each other. She must see more of Arthur before she could decide on the comparative value of their intellectual endowments. She fancied, — she was *almost* sure, that she should never like him so well as poor Willy! —

Meanwhile they were agreeably apprised by the receding uproar of the storm, and the sunbino gleams

between the crevices of the shutters, that the weather was clearing. Hastily throwing open the window, they readmitted at once the light of day and the exquisite fragrance of the freshened atmosphere.

"I don't believe the flowers in those old-fashioned parterres have been renewed or weeded, since the days when we used to get into disgrace by scampering over them together," said Arthur, as, kneeling on the window-seat, he leant out to enjoy the scene so fraught with boyish reminiscences.

"If you want to see a well-kept garden, walk with me to Northover, and accept a late luncheon or early dinner," said his cousin.

"Not to-day, Tiny. I must hurry back to Clevelands, or they will fancy me drowned in the storm. But now that you have admitted me — (may I not hope so?) — into cousinly favour, you must invite me over, some day soon, to dine and sleep, that I may make acquaintance with my uncle Corbet."

Before she could remonstrate, he was gone; and when reflecting, some hours afterwards, in her cheerful, quiet, sitting-room, over the strange events of the morning, she deeply regretted that she had not *insisted* on his visiting Northover, and breaking bread under her father's roof. The opportunity might not recur; and in dealing with people so uncertain as the Enmores, it was dangerous to miss *the tide*.

CHAPTER XIX.

A FEW days afterwards, there arrived at Northover, addressed to Miss Corbet, a pianoforte, whose tone and case did credit to the selection of the anonymous donor.

The welcome gift was at first ascribed to Lucretia. But poor Tiny's thanks were indignantly resented.

"You well know," she wrote, "that I would sooner hear the house-dog howl than listen to the best music which misses and pianofortes ever conspired to inflict upon society. You must flatter yourselves you are clear of my company for the remnant of my days, to fancy I would incur the risk of having my quiet evenings spoiled by the tinkling of cymbals. Perhaps, my dear child, as my cousin Jane don't choose to have you for a daughter-in-law, or even for an inmate, she may have been seized with a fit of compunctious generosity? — Write and ask."

Mrs. Enmore, however, resented the imputation quite as stiffly as Lucretia; and Tiny, regretting to have prematurely expressed gratitude where all pretension to it was so ungraciously disavowed, resolved to wait till the real donor was discovered. Secretly, very secretly, she trusted that the instrument might have been sent by order of that absent cousin by whom her taste for music

en stimulated and perfected. She had often de-
to Willy the jangling old piano at Grenfield
and perhaps, from his distant home, he had taken
for its replacement.

the apathy of her father on the occasion was almost
ing.

he piano was, doubtless, a present from some
r of her mother's family. — What signified
”

though easy enough on most points, he could be
te as a mule when he chose; and nothing would
le him to take his daughter to call at Cleveland's.
ould not court the acquaintance of a jackanapes
thur Rawdon.”

t as he was making the declaration, however, in
the jackanapes in person; accosting the confused
utors as “uncle,” and “cousin,” and establishing
between them as if a daily frequenter of the

such friendly cordiality, Henry Corbet, who was
d to oppose dignity with dignity, and resent the
ment with which he supposed young Rawdon
to regard an interloper on his property, opened
rt without reserve. Nothing could be more agree-
him or more conducive to the discharge of his
than to be on good terms with the heir-at-law.
he held his appointment exclusively from the
f Chancery, he thought it only just that young

Rawdon should enjoy his share of whatever sport Heckington was able to afford. After a prolonged walk together over the farm, during which Arthur submitted to be instructed in a thousand details he did not care to learn, the uncle and nephew began to fit each other like hand and glove.

"I did not take the trouble of riding here this fiery morning, my dear Tiny, only to ask you how you liked your piano, and to tell you at what period Broadwood's tuner is to make his appearance," said he to his cousin, on his return. "As Mrs. Horsford was about to despatch a messenger to Northover with some sort of invitation, I offered her my services."

That the invitation was contained in one of Mrs. Horsford's flumming notes, abounding in superlatives, scored and double-scored, and forestalling all possible excuses, he did not think it necessary to add. Mr. and Mrs. Corbet were entreated to come in their pony-trap and dress at Cleveland; "or Mrs. H. would have the *very greatest* pleasure in sending the close carriage for them, if the weather proved unsettled or either of them happened to be indisposed."

Tiny, who felt certain that her father would feel greater than the "greatest pleasure" in staying at home, was no little amazed when he suggested immediate acceptance. The truth was, that he was delighted with the idea of the prospect of meeting on convivial terms the cheerful young nephew to whom he had taken a

great a fancy. — A pleasant surprise to his daughter, — who wanted to hear of Amy and her child, and to talk over with Mr. Turberville their pleasant days at Nigham Grange.

"I shall be all the better received on my return," said Arthur, in taking leave, "for having succeeded in coaxing you out of your cell."

But to emerge from that sober cell, after six months' seclusion, into the gaudy saloons of Clevelands, served painfully to attest the aptness of her cousin's remark concerning the kaleidoscope and the fragments of glittering glass. Florence and Carry with their pretty pink-and-white cheeks, bright eyes, and elaborately braided hair, their elastic gait, high-pitched voices, and gossamer dresses, looked like a couple of butterflies poised on the blue flowers of the conservatory. In her plain black dress she felt almost out of place among those "gay creatures of the elements that in the colours of the rainbow lived."

Yet the approving smiles of her father and cousin ought to have satisfied her that she was not very much unmiss. Her quiet manners, graceful deportment, and delicate features, gained more advantage than she was aware of, from contrast with those restless, conscious, vulgar.

A person content to be sought, and equally well satisfied to be neglected, is always a satisfactory *liet*.

"If you only knew, dearest Tiny," cried one pretty butterfly, "how much you were missed this season in London! — Not so much by Amy, now a fixture in her nursery, — (where another cradle is preparing for the end of the autumn) Amy thinks of nothing but teeth-cutting and r — It was rather Sir James who deplored your absence in the interest of those solemn friends, to whose sober habits were so acceptable."

"But it was not alone in Park Lane you were required after, my dearest girl," interposed Mrs. I. I am afraid she might not be satisfied with so modified a compliment. "Lady Harriet Singleton, to whose party I accompanied my daughter Armstead last year, was full of inquiries, when she sent out her cards this morning concerning our charming young friend, and we were to forward her invitation."

"Had I been in town, my mourning would have prevented my profiting by her kindness," said Miss Corbet.

"In London, my dear, you could scarcely be idle for so unusual a length of time. Family engagements, like family prayers, have been abridged of their tediousness by Court example."

Miss Corbet made no rejoinder. Even in London she should have grudged no mark of respect to the memory of her excellent step-mother.

Meanwhile it was no small improvement

society at Clevelands, that the family circle was curtailed, like family mournings, by the absence of the three noisy, flippant sons. Dick had joined his regiment, — Clement was at Oxford in place of Bob, — who had recently been recorded in one of the "CIVIL APPOINTMENTS" paragraphs of the *Observer* newspaper, as salaried in some select Downing Street corporation, in which there was every prospect of his tontining, in the course of the next quarter of a century, into the official preciseness and mental and corporeal baldness of a Barton Frere. As he could neither write a legible hand, nor affirm on his own knowledge that two and two did not make half-a-dozen, he had been appointed Under Secretary to some board, of whose "offending" against public opinion and common-sense, a distant Right Honourable cousin of Mrs. Horsford was the "head and front."

To Tiny, his extradition from the county afforded considerable relief. She had learned from Willy to regard him as the evil genius of his brother; and his absence partly accounted to her for the scales having so suddenly fallen from the eyes of Arthur Rawdon.

"You mustn't suppose, my dear young friend," observed Mrs. Horsford, as the ladies were wandering together after dinner on the lawn, "that because you see Mr. Rawdon of Heckington domesticated among us, his prospects are brightening; that dreadful mother of his, my dear, is as obdurate as ever! Though one would imagine that her risk of losing, last summer, so promising

a son would have opened her eyes to his value, disposed her to conduce to his happy establishment life, she has become more savage than ever: — pretending that poor Bob was the cause of the accident, that — no matter what. And that odious schemer of a brother, in the West Indies, is just wicked about it. I did not myself see Mrs. Ennis this year; for she has evidently taken precautions against an interview that might force her to listen to reason. But I had some conversation with that crack-brain Miss Rawdon, and gathered from her that her mother and Jane would never contribute a shilling to promote son's marriage; and that there was not a 'girl in the land,' (with the exception always of yourself,) whom she would not prefer as a daughter-in-law to my daughter Florence."

To reply to these animadversions was difficult. Corbet took refuge in observing that Florence and Carry were still so young, that their mother must congratulate herself on the prospect of retaining them at home a little longer.

Mrs. Horsford's exultation in the prospect seemed however, far from ecstatic; and it was perhaps to punish her guest for a compliment she suspected to be ironical that she inquired whether the news of Carry's engagement to dear Charles Turberville had not greatly surprised her? —

"Far from it," was Tiny's candid reply. "

moment I heard of her arrival at Higham Grange, I thought nothing more likely."

Again, the sweetspoken lady was a little in doubt whether, in spite of the candid smile of poor Tiny, her reply might not conceal a sarcasm. — But she had no intention of falling out with any niece of Arthur's mother; above all, just then, — when she was intent on making a party to Heckington, lest Charles Turberville should be led to suppose that his Abbey was the only family-seat on which the Horsfords were likely to be engrafted.

"I was thinking, my dear love," said she, finding no proposal that way tending, proceed from Miss Corbet — "that it would be a charming thing, now the days are so long and the weather so delicious, to make up a little picnic at Heckington, — in the park under the trees, — or in the Hall itself, — or —"

"At Northover, rather; where, if you will accept a luncheon, you could spend the rest of the day in Heckington Park. — My father, considering his engagements with the Court of Chancery, is scrupulous about making use of the Hall."

"But, with Arthur of the party, my dearest love, what could possibly be the objection?"

"*That* point, papa and my cousin must decide. On my own part, I promise tongue, chicken, and sherry, for as many as you will be kind enough to bring, whenever you feel inclined to accept it."

Though this was not exactly what Mrs. Horsford intended, her project being to give a *déjeuner à la fourchette* at the Hall, to two or three leading families of the neighbourhood, at which the Corbets, if actually suppressed, were to be let down as low as possible, she was forced to give a smiling assent. On further reference to Arthur and Mr. Corbet, an early date was fixed. They were to ride and drive over in twos and threes, according to the caprice of the lovers; to an early dinner under the beech-trees, if the weather were propitious, or retreat into covert at Northover if boded rain — the usual doom of *à fresco* parties in a succulent climate.

A great event to Tiny: — the first time it had fallen to her share to do the honours of even so modest an entertainment! — A neighbour or two to dinner Grenfield House, had formed the utmost limit of hospitality compatible with her father's hitherto straitened means. It seemed strange that the first time she was called upon to preside over his table, should be to do so for the son of Reginald Enmore!

Though far from of a suspicious nature, she saw, fancied she saw, that neither Florence nor Caroli Horsford was altogether pleased at the deference shown her by their affianced lovers. Charles Turberville, kind-hearted being, attributing her paleness and thinness to the black dress she was wearing, and the family affliction with which it was connected, treated her with

grave respect; while Arthur was full of affectionate consideration, lest he should appear to the flighty Horsfords to disregard one whom, among themselves, they reckoned, in their private summings up, in the list of his poor relations.

But in the course of the evening that succeeded the Clevelands dinner, it required no great exercise of perspicuity to perceive that the two young couples were less in conceit with each other, than at its commencement. — Like all artificial people, the Horsfords fall occasionally off their stilts, or lapsed into their natural notes.

"*Of course* they would come early," Florence had observed, in exchanging "good-night" with the Corbets. "Arthur would take care that they came early. No fear of their being late *at Northover*, if Mr. Rawdon were of the party."

Caroline, on the other hand, flounced off into the conservatory, begging poor Charley would make his own arrangements for the projected riding party, without reference to *her*.

"Perhaps she might not ride at all. Riding in a broiling sun, on a high road, was detestable; and there were no green lanes, — no anything that was pleasant, — between Clevelands and Heckington."

The admiration previously entertained by both young men of Miss Corbet's gentle manners and conciliating *disposition*, was certainly not diminished by comparison

with these ebullitions of temper. But it was clear to poor Tiny that she must keep a careful watch over her conduct; lest some thoughtless inadvertence should seem to justify the jealousy of these pettish girls.

Only two days were to elapse for preparation. But she was too ladylike to be fussy. The simple repast she had offered, was all she meant to provide. A few cold dishes, salads and fruits, calculated to be served —

“In the cool shade, with cloth on herbage laid.”

Had the Lady Sophias or Honourable Misses whom it had been Mrs. Horsford's hope to include in the party really joined them at Northover, they would probably have been a little disappointed. — But the garden fruits of Heckington that were to crown the feast, were, as in most old-fashioned houses, of first-rate excellence; and, a little to Miss Corbet's mortification, there arrived in the interim, from Gunter's, a box of exquisite confectionery, which she was inclined to resent as an affront, till she remembered that the offering of these beautiful bonbons was made by Arthur, not to the quiet cousin he had named Placidia, but to the vivacious lady of his love.

In addition to the Clevelands half-dozen, each so important in his or her own conceit that they seemed to constitute double the number, the Horsfords had invited and brought with them a pair of little quiet neighbours, a Mr. and Mrs. William Hartland of Shrublands; — people so colourless and insignificant, that they would

inserted any where, certain to harmonise with every body; a sort of universally-available sawdust to prevent other elements of a party from jarring. The William Hartlands consequently received twice as many invitations, and partook of twice as many turbot and saddle-of-mutton, as the most popular people in the county.

On the present occasion, perhaps, Mrs. Horsford surmised that the presence of strangers might be a restraint on the somewhat too frequent retorts of her daughters; who were growing a little peevish at seeing their wedding-favours, and diamond-hoops, receding before them like a mirage. And as Heckington Hall had been shut up ever since the establishment of the Hartlands in the neighbourhood, there was some pretext for saying to them — "Come and see the palace of the Sleeping Beauty. The agent's family will provide us with refreshments."

To Miss Corbet, unaware of the motives of Mrs. Horsford, or the *status* of her *protégés* as "walking lady and gentleman," in all the processions and pantomimes of the landed gentry of twelve adjacent parishes, the sight of a showy little stranger in a lace bonnet and muslin dress, spangled like the nest of a bower-bird with ribbon-loops and coloured bows, *ad infinitum*, was somewhat alarming. But she soon found that Mrs. William Hartland and her finery, if a little out of place, was no greater *gêne* on the party than one of the linnets chirping over their heads; and of infinite use in supplying ad-

miring interjections when they made the tour of a house whose utmost beauties scarcely warranted exclamations of "oh!" or "ah!"

To Florence, indeed, who saw, in both house and furniture, only what she should hereafter reform or terminate, even the ugliness of the spot possessed interest. But Mrs. Horsford, with all her complimentary fluency, found it difficult to supply the proper amount of enthusiasm when she beheld the utter uninhabitableness of the place in its present condition: — furniture *entre deux ages*, old-fashioned without being venerable; to say nothing of a total want of accommodation for the pernicious class of the community invented by the present century, and denominated upper servants, although no servants at all. — The Clevelands housekeeper and butler would not have put up for a day with a servant hall having a stone floor; or the light closet of a stevedore's room, which had so long served the need of Heckington.

By degrees, that she might be at liberty to resist these mother-in-lawish contempts to Charles Turpin and his future wife, without offending the pride of Arthur Rawdon, she detained them and the Hartleys on her side to criticise the hangings and scrutinise the pictures; while Miss Corbet and her cousin ran through the rooms, — peopled for *them* with the living and the dead, and a thousand ancestral traditions. They were, in fact, alone with the past: the turpentine having glided off unobserved to visit a friend.

establishment dearer to a Paterfamilias than saloon or picture-gallery: namely, its stables and kennels.

"But where is Florence?" inquired Miss Corbet, — stopping short, after ascending the square old oaken staircase, as they reached the lobby of what were called the Tapestry-rooms, sacred to the habitation of the heads of the family.

"Never mind her, — Florence is miles behind us."

"Then let us wait here till she arrives."

"At all events, sit down and rest. Florence, I will answer for it, is still in the yellow-saloon, measuring on her mind's eye the number of ells of Lyons silk that must be ordered from Paris, to place that strong-hold of grandmamma Rawdon's pride in presentable array. Don't sigh, Placidia! If you live long enough to see us installed here, you will not find a rag of the old Rawdon trumpery left in its place; — scarcely, perhaps, one brick left upon another!"

Placidia now sighed in right earnest.

"One knows that every step of Progress, is what is called in the right direction," said she, endeavouring to look less grave than she felt. "Still, it is the weakness of human nature, from the days of Lot's wife, to look backward; a conservative instinct, I suppose, implanted in our nature, lest things should be too suddenly overturned. You might make Heckington as rich and comfortable as *Turberville Abbey*, *Arthur*, or as gay and light as *Clevelands*, and I should still regret this faded

tapestry, and the dim old leather-hangings of library."

"But you, dearest, are a creature apart. You have not been vulgarised by the banalities of modern education. I remember that dear old governess of yours, Tim with her starched cap, and starched mind, teaching you geography with ivory counters, 'after the method, you gentleman,' (she used to say) 'of the celebrated Abbé Gauthier;' and who knew about as much of the graces of fashionable deportment, or the surfaceism of the great world, as I of the ruined cities of Mexico! — And it follows, that Placidia remains true to the wisdom of a mildewed furniture of her ancestors; to which, dear cousin, you will find me ever ready to respond Amen."

"There are some other articles of faith, Atty," as she, shaking her head, "to which I would much rather find you true —"

"Such as —"

"A belief that the absent are not *always* in the wrong."

"By the absent, meaning of course, the young gentleman who is crushing sugar-canes at Fredville?"

"By the absent, meaning my dear cousin Willy, your only brother."

"Had she omitted the word 'dear,' the fair Placidia might perhaps have heard me utter a second Amen."

"Still, jealous of that poor fellow!" —

“Still, both jealous and envious! — I own it, Tiny. I don’t glory in it, however. I know it to be mean and saltry. But I can’t forgive him for having been preferred to me by father, mother, and cousin. My father hated me from the moment I became Rawdon of Heckington. My mother took me *en grippe* from the moment I was withdrawn from her tyranny by my intimacy with the Horsfords. I know I have told you all this before. Don’t be impatient. Don’t let your love for Willy disturb the evenness of that serene little nature. But some day, in the solitude of your chamber, — or rather in the solitude of the old beech-grove yonder, which I dare say is twice as tranquil, — ask yourself whether it can be expected of a fiery Creole of twenty-two, to forgive the person who has been rendered independent at his expense, and is rolling in riches, while *my* fortune is doled out to me by the grudging hand of the law in such miserable dribblets, that I cannot even fulfil my engagements as an honourable man.”

“I am certain that the solitude of either my chamber or the beech-grove would never make me fancy you a victim, because your father chose to bequeath his property to his younger son. Why *I* have as much pretence for hating *you*, Atty, because my grandfather preferred you to myself to inherit Heckington! — I was the only child of his eldest child.” —

Arthur Enmore started. — In that light, the question *had not before presented itself* to his mind. As a matter

of equity, he felt that Tiny was better entitled to himself.

"I will believe, and do, anything you wish," said he, in a less assured tone than usual.

"Then write by the next mail to Willy, and tell yourself his affectionate brother. It is not much to ask and nothing in this world would make him half happy. To him, silver and gold, houses and lands, are nothing, compared with the love you withhold from him."

Again, Arthur Rawdon started. Had this young brother of his — this *favoured* younger brother, — indeed the advantage over him in nobleness of soul? —

"Or if you object to so decided a step," resumed Miss Corbet, — misinterpreting his hesitation, — "I will add a postscript to the letter. I am about to write him and I mean to give him an account of our party here to-day and tell him how well both his brother and Heckington were looking."

Arthur answered not a word. But when Placid turned towards him, she saw tears in his eyes.

"Do you remember, Tiny," said he, after a short pause, "one day when we were all children, a miserable robin, which had found its way into this gallery, flitted up and down, pursued by Willy and me with our battoons, uttering pitiful little cries: while you stood weeping bitterly, and upbraiding us with our cruelty?"

Miss Corbet tried in vain to recollect the incident.

cousins of hers, had been guilty of so *many* cruel
 3! —

Just as you looked that day, you look now. The
 as mother to the woman; — always timid, always
 passionate, always protecting the weaker side. My
 mother Rawdon, on that occasion, disturbed by our
 stalked out of her dressing-room, and scolded you
 its for what she called ‘romping with the boys:’
 justice which you bore in silence, — patient as an

And now, those noisy women, whom I hear
 ching, will probably be equally unjust, and accuse
 of whispering in corners with one of the boys. Bear
 them as patiently as you did with the old lady,
 Tiny, in gratitude for having prevailed. — Here’s
 and upon it! — I *will* write to Willy. I will even
 to him that I have been greatly in fault. — Are
 satisfied?” —

satisfied was she, and so fondly did her brightened
 enance attest her joy, that there was some little
 at for the change of colour in that of Florence
 ord, when she suddenly came upon them as they
 from the ottoman to await the approaching party.
 ed and indignant, so far from confiding to them as
 had intended, that she thought the yellow-room
 look divine, furnished with seagreen silk and an
 ason carpet of the moss pattern, she proceeded in
 silence along the gallery; — turning a deaf ear
 or *Tiny’s recapitulation* of certain family anecdotes

which she had learned from Laetitia Rawdon, come the Nankin jars and agate cups, — monsters in porcelain, and shepherdesses worked in faded crew by which it was adorned.

She had a great deal to drive from her thought fore she could again occupy them with the his Heckington.

CHAPTER XX.

THE tour of the house was, like most such sight-seeing expeditions, especially when there are no *chefs-d'œuvre* of art to be admired and blundered about, eminently unsuccessful. The weather was oppressive, the party weary and hungry; having exhausted their common-place small-talk, and possessing nothing better in reserve.

It was a relief to all when, at the bottom of the stairs, they found awaiting them the cheery faces of Mr. Corbet and Mr. Horsford; with little Mr. William Cartland, who looked like sixpence added to the two billings of their half-crown, — announcing the welcome intelligence that their collation awaited them in the *bede*.

After dragging through the afternoon sunshine to the pot, they threw themselves languidly on the fresh *serbage*, which had been carefully mown and rolled for their use; and contemplated the well-covered, snow-white table-cloth, as though it promised a banquet for the gods. Bright goblets and cool drinks were deposited within reach; and by the time they had eaten and *wink*, and drunk till they were ready to eat again, even

the crosser individual of the party felt considerably more in charity with his fellow-creatures.

The middle-aged gentlemen were clear in opinion, (and in the opinion of the young ones, what prolix in their exposition of it), that what might be the shortcomings of the old Hall, the buildings were superlative; while Charley Turbe honestly admitted that several of the oaks within were as fine as the finest in Somersetshire.

Little Mrs. William Hartland lisped her attestation of both assertions.

"Capital barns, certainly, — the noblest oak ever beheld."

Mrs. Horsford, on the other hand, who had been unnaturally deprived of her dues and prerogative mother-in-law, by the dignified husband of her first, glanced fondly from Florence and Arthur to the roof of the Hall; and began to regard it, through the medium of several glasses of sherry, as a very comfortable abode for her old age.

It was only Tiny, who, in despite of chafed strawberries, still felt dispirited. It was a lovely evening. The shadows were lengthening, — the rooks on their way homewards, — the birds piping up that thankful, even-song, so much better intoned than their own; and the season and scene were so pure and delightful, that she felt as if she wanted to enjoy them in congenial company. The hollow mirth of the Turbes

and servile echoes added by the Hartlands, wearied her spirit. She longed for a ramble under the trees, either alone, or with her cousin; that they might talk over the past and the absent. Above all, she wished something definitive to be settled concerning the olive branch about to be despatched to Fredville.

The dinner had passed off without a fault; succeeded by an exquisite dessert, with the usual accompaniment of detonating bonbons, and feminine affectations. Recalled by these associations to the memory of many a former tonic, Mrs. Horsford suggested a little music. Her daughters might perhaps be prevailed upon to sing a set; for, on such occasions, they were accustomed to be provided with a well-rehearsed nocturno, or Venetian carrolle — an impromptu *fait à loisir*, to complete their angelhood in the eyes, or rather ears, of the unsuspecting.

But on the present occasion, having nothing to gain, the young ladies proved recalcitrant.

"With the blackbirds in such excellent tune," Florence observed, "nobody wanted music from *them*."

Apparently nobody *did*; for Charles Turberville instantly applied to Miss Corbet for "one of those charming German ballads which used to delight their little circle at Higham Grange."

Whereupon Mr. and Mrs. William Hartland, the *parus for the party*, who, on Mrs. Horsford's appeal to her daughters, had warmly echoed her suggestion with

"Oh! yes — pray, Miss Horsford, give us one of sweet little duets," now as readily contributed the all means, Miss Corbet, one of those charming German ballads which used to delight the little circle at Hi Grange."

Tiny was thankful that her father had disappeared from the group, to order their coffee despatched Northover; for had *he* requested her to sing, she have complied. It was a rule of her life, never to obey her father.

As it was, she ventured to plead fatigue.

"We had far better take a ramble in the shrub while coffee is preparing," said she. "The dew is beginning to rise, and everything is so fresh and fragrant."

"No, no, Tiny; — no pretexts — no evasions!" Arthur Rawdon, who, because he had been persuaded into doing what he had long known it was his duty to do, was in the highest spirits. — "We won't let you off; — we can't let you off. Tiny, you must, and I have a right to your obedience to-day, dear Tiny. I know I have. You owe me a sacrifice worth half-a-dozen German ballads. I won't be refused!"

Of the whole party who had just risen from their seats on the grass, every eye was upon her.

"I am sure you will kindly favour us, and your cousin, my dear Miss Corbet," said Mrs. W. Hartland.

"I am sure you will kindly favour us, my dear

bet, and oblige your cousin," echoed her little husband.

"But what is John bringing this way in such double quick-time?" inquired Mr. Horsford, as one of his servants was seen hurrying with rapid strides towards the ch-grove. "He does not often trouble himself to go h a pace."

"He has a letter in his hand," observed Charley Turville, carelessly.

"Let us hope that Clevelands is not in flames. Or it probably a telegraphic message."

"Good Heavens! Something may be amiss with Amy her little girl!" exclaimed Florence, really alarmed. "ay, pray, Arthur, run and meet him."

The footman, however, perceiving that he was observed, quickened his already rapid pace. And it proved t, though brought by Mr. Horsford's servant, the des- ch was addressed to Miss Corbet.

"As it came by express, ma'am, to Northover, and no was in the way to bring it on, I thought no time ht to be lost."

Tiny had no ears to lend to his explanation. The er was in Lucretia Rawdon's handwriting; and it must re needed some important exigency to determine her send a letter by express. She tore the letter hastily m. Her visitors seemed uncertain whether they ought leave her to herself for the decipherment of its con- ts: *the more so, when they saw that, after a first*

start of surprise, her colour, as she read on, went and came; till deserting her altogether, her terror-stricken face became ghastly as death.

Mrs. Horsford, always officious, made a move to come forward to her assistance. But after a moment, a piteous cry burst from the depths of her heart; — and looking round in desperation, with the letter, still half unread in her hand, she rushed into the arms of her cousin Arthur, — clasped her own round his neck, — and in an agony of tears, concealed her face in his bosom! —

The amazed spectators scarcely knew whether to sympathise, or be shocked at this passionate outbreak though it was, perhaps, only Florence who noticed how affectionately the embrace was reciprocated. All, however, could see that, after a few convulsive sobs, the clasp of the poor sufferer suddenly relaxed. Her arms fell lifeless; and in a state of total insensibility she would have sunk to the ground, but that she was resolutely sustained by the agitated Arthur, who called loudly on his friend Turberville to assist in bearing her to the house.

Great was the trial to Mrs. Horsford, who had darted forward to pick up the momentous letter which had fallen from poor Tiny's hand, that the presence of the Hartlands, for once in their lives in the way, prevented her from casting an eye over its contents. The distress by which Miss Corbet was so strangely overcome, could not be of a pecuniary nature; or the missive would have

en addressed to her father. — Who was dead? — who was ill? — If it should only prove to be the savage and mother in May Fair!

Slowly, however, and with decent propriety, she and the rest of the party followed the two young men and their lifeless burthen towards the Hall; as being nearer than Northover to the spot where they had dined. But when they arrived there, the eyes of Miss Corbet were still closed, — her hands still icy cold. It was no common fainting fit. Her father and her female-attendant were already sent for; and Dr. Ashe was anxiously hinted for by the Hartlands.

“If you were to take a look at the letter?” suggested Mr. Horsford, in a very low voice to her future son-in-law, — placing it open in his hand. — And Arthur, who regarded the pale beautiful girl he had just placed upon a sofa, as his sister, his life, his better self, — did not hesitate. Nothing that afflicted Tiny, but he had a right to claim as an affliction to himself. —

Little did he suspect how great a one! — It was already too late for his intended letter to Fredville. — Willy was gone! — Rawdon of Heckington was brotherless! —

No one who witnessed the effect of his slight glance at the letter, could doubt how dearly its contents involved his happiness. But Arthur had sufficient mastery over himself to utter no exclamation that betrayed the news upon his feelings. Hurrying out of the room, with

the letter in his hand, he left them to develop mystery by a thousand foolish suppositions; while gave way, in a distant solitary chamber, not only to anguish of bereavement, but to the pangs of remorse.

Lucretia's letter was written from his mother's house. To Mrs. Enmore, the death of her son had been formally communicated by Messrs. Harman of Spanish Town, husband's executors; who, during the minority of son, had officiated as his agents. They wrote in haste, and all details were reserved for the following mail.

"I should have come down to you myself, my child, to break this terrible intelligence," wrote Lucr. "But I can't leave poor Jane. Jane is more to be pitied than yourself; for *she* parted from her son in anger; has never written him a line since his departure. Her self-upbraidings are indeed afflicting. Perhaps because she is so little apt to betray her feelings. I don't think that I ever heard her speak out before. My dear child, the moment I hear another syllable on the subject I will write again. But a fortnight must first elapse. After all, *what* can we learn? That we have lost him! We can't unlearn *that*. Your aunt's first thought, receiving the news, was to send for me, — as one who had loved him in life, and would lament him in death. — And when the shock of meeting was over, she *me* instantly send off an express to you — 'poor Willy Tiny.' — I should have done so, my dear, wither

instructions. She said not a word about writing to Arthur. Most likely she don't know his address. Or perhaps she resents his barbarous conduct to his poor brother. But where's the use of perpetuating grievances! Let us rather bow our heads to the decree of the Almighty which has taken him from us, and endeavour to love better those who are left behind.

"Write, therefore, please, to Mr. Rawdon; and let him know that his brother William expired at Fredville, on the 8th of June. — This is all we know at present about the matter. And so, God bless and comfort you, my poor child, prays your afflicted cousin,

"LUCRETIA R."

Long before Miss Corbet revived sufficiently to explain to her father, who was now kneeling by her side, the cause of her deep distress, the agitation of Mrs. Horsford was nearly equal to that of the real mourners. She had ascertained from the servant by whom Mr. Corbet was fetched to the hall, that Arthur was already gone; that he had rushed to Northover, mounted Mr. Horsford's mare, — and ridden away at full speed, — no one knew whither: — carrying with him probably the fatal letter which had caused so much disturbance. How was she to come at the facts of the case? — Whom had they lost? — What had they lost? — Or perhaps what *had they gained?* —

To say that her maternal foresight did not glance at

the probability that Mrs. Enmore had made a sudden exit, — Mrs. Enmore, who stood like a Pietà's wall between Arthur and Heckington, — between her daughter and Arthur, — would be to do her injustice. But even when poor Tiny's few faltered words to her sympathising father disclosed the truth, and elicited from Mr. Corbet exclamations of "Poor Willy, — such a fine young fellow — In the flower of manhood! — What a sad blow to them all," — though the advantage was of a minor degree, she assumed the sort of downcast, family-affection countenance, which seemed due to the occasion: — a death, namely, which conferred a large fortune on the only member of the Enmore family in whom she felt an interest.

In a voice appropriately subdued, she begged Charles Turberville to hasten their preparations for departure. "Mr. Corbet and his daughter would be glad to be alone. They should of course find poor dear Arthur at Cleveland. His frantic grief had doubtless impelled him to hurry home."

On the fortnight of suspense that followed this grievous blow, so trying both to Arthur and his cousin, it would be needlessly painful to dwell. Though the worst was certain — though nothing could palliate or alter that irrevocable word — *dead* — to those who loved poor Willy Enmore, their total ignorance concerning the origin and manner of his death was a terrible aggravation.

The first impulse of Arthur on quitting Heckington was to hasten to his mother. But the harsh truths which, according to Lucretia Rawdon's account of the turn her sorrow was taking, were likely to assail his ears, would be more than he could bear. He had not courage, however, to remain at Cleveland. Not because his affliction was underrated; but because Mrs. Horsford beset him from morning till night with condolences and sympathies to the full value of the four thousand per annum to which he had succeeded. He would almost rather have seen the Cleveland party pursue their usual routine of noisy frivolity, than assume a sudden grimace of sensibility whenever he made his appearance; a grimace as little accordant with the real expression of their feelings, as the tragic or comic masks worn by comedians of old.

After a few days of the decent restraint which at first Mrs. Horsford placed upon her curiosity, she began to indulge in hints and questions concerning his family-affairs which probed him to the quick, and utterly exhausted his patience; and having applied to Mr. Corbet for a few days' hospitality, with the cordial frankness with which he would himself have granted it, he hastened to Northover. There, at least, he was sure of sincerity. If subjected by poor Tiny to reproaches for his past conduct, they would at least be tenderly and femininely spoken. Nor would a single sordid thought mingle with her sorrow or admonitions.

Till then, he had not been fully sensible of her qualities. Till then, he had never fully appreciated the superiority of a pure and lovely nature to a pure and lovely face. The mercenary character of the Cleveland family was becoming nauseous. When he announced to them his intended visit "for change of air and scene," he saw at once that they mistrusted his motives. His independence being now accomplished, they decided that his first thought was his cousin, and were unwilling to let him out of their sight till something definitive was settled for the completion of his matrimonial engagements.

But as regarded the comfort to be derived from the society of his dear gentle Placidia, his hopes and apprehensions were alike superfluous. The mother had attained sufficient strength for the effort, she had obtained her father's permission to hasten to Hebe Street. — No matter whether her company were desired — No matter whether it were even tolerated. — she would remain, by the side of Willy's mother, that they might at least weep together, and together await the details of his last moments.

CHAPTER XXI.

To enter that house again, was indeed a trial to Emily. But though still so feeble that she was scarcely equal to the journey to town, she regretted only that she had not been more expeditious. For already, Mrs. Emore had returned to her chronic state of taciturnity. The surface of the lava had hardened. Whatever might be the glow beneath, all that met the eye was ash-like and cold.

But though she had ceased to talk of her sons even to Lucretia and wore her crape and bombazine as stiffly as if it had been a suit of armour, that single subject engrossed every thought of her mind. Under her unnatural formality, throbbed a heart that was all but bursting.

If she did not respond to the passionate emotion with which Miss Corbet, on entering her presence, threw herself on her knees beside her chair, and hid her face in her stately skirts, it was because, at that moment, her niece brought strangely before her mind another Sophia, whom she had seen on more than one occasion weeping at the feet of her parents. She cherished, moreover, an implacable resentment against the poor girl, for

having despatched her lost Willy to Interlaken, to be harassed and insulted by his brother.

Still, the bitter-hearted woman could not bid her, sailing as she was, return to Northover; and Tiny took possession once more of the gloomy chamber where she was never again to be rendered watchful by the steps of her cousin, pacing the room overhead! — How dreary it all seemed! — What would she not have given for one of those cheerful lecture-provoking whistles on the stairs which used to announce his return home; or the whiff of a cigar, which betrayed his arrival. So young, so gay, so sanguine, it seemed as though he could not have died!

But she was alone. She must resign herself. She must stifle her grief. Every day, Lucretia stole up to her room when Mrs. Enmore had betaken herself to the two hours of sermon-reading which she called her "devotions;" — not to assist in drying her tears, but to make them flow afresh, by reference to "the *ever* loved name!" — She had so much to tell of Willy; — so much to reveal which it was no longer treachery to betray! —

"He would have given his life for you, Tiny, my child," said she. "It was only his overstrained romantic generosity that prevented his endeavouring to engage your affections. He knew that his mother and your mother had entered into some sort of family compact to marry you to Arthur; the old lady fancying it a *very*

on due to the memory of her daughter Sophia, that sooner or later her child should become Mrs. Rawdon of Heckington.

"But since he was aware that Arthur had positively engaged himself to Florence Horsford!"

"He fancied it a mere boyish entanglement. He thought such an alliance unworthy of his brother. That would never come to pass, we both felt assured; for Mrs. Enmore had pledged herself, heart and soul, that it should never be. Under such circumstances, it would have been ungenerous, perhaps, to place obstacles in the way of the happier marriage awaiting Arthur Rawdon if he had prevailed on to renounce his foolish projects."

"He should have considered my happiness as well as Arthur's," said Tiny in a low voice still resting her heavy brow upon her folded hands. — "Why should he suppose that either my hand or heart was at Arthur's disposal? — He should have considered *me* as much as his brother."

"He *did*, my poor child. He thought and cared for no one else. It was to provide you with a suitable home, rather than from interest in the place, that he petitioned the Court of Chancery to appoint your father agent to the Heckington estate. Dearly did he delight in the idea of your inhabiting the spot where he had first known and loved you!"

Soothing assurances! But alas! how unequal to satisfy the *craving of the eye, and ear, and heart*, that so

yearned to look on him again, — to hear his voice, to press his hand, — to feel that a true staunch heart was beating in unison with her own.

“Such pains, too, as he took,” added Lucretia — her eyes moistening as she went maundering on, — “to prevent your being aware of all he lavished upon you! It went to my conscience, Tiny, to accept your thanks for that pretended gift of mine when you first settled Northover. But how could I do otherwise than comply with the poor boy’s entreaties, and accept the credit of his generosity to spare the delicacy of your feelings. We both knew that from *him* you would never accept a gift of money.”

“It came then from Willy!” — exclaimed M. Corbet, clasping her hands in deep emotion. “And that I never should have guessed it!” —

“Yet would any other than a little linnet-headed creature like yourself have supposed it possible, that even the stingiest of old maids could economise a sum of five hundred pounds, out of an income of two hundred a-year?”

“I formed no suppositions. I simply believed what you told me. And all this time, then, we have been living on the bounty of my cousin!”

“Not a mail has passed, Tiny, till this last unhappy one, since he left England, without bringing me inquiries about you; — all you said and did, — all you were looked for. My visit to Northover, the other day, purposed

ly to enable me to assure him that you were well, and happy, and had not forgotten poor Willy."

"You told him, perhaps, of the renewal of my acquaintance with his brother?"

"The letter in which I informed him of Arthur Rawdon's visit to Heckington was fated never to reach me. Before it arrived at Fredville, Willy must have been in his grave. But I *did* tell him before how, all this spring in town, Arthur was besetting his mother for such an addition to his Chancery allowance as would enable him to marry: — and how obstinately Jane had stuck to her declaration that, to forward his union with one of those trashy Horsfords, not a guinea would she ever lay down."

"To the last, then — to the very last — he must have looked on the marriage as undecided."

"Scarcely, I should think. It must have reached me from many quarters that Arthur, to *him* so brutal, was led about in London by the Horsfords, like a tamed bear. Where *they* were invited, *he* was invited: where *they* went, *he* went. Arthur Rawdon of Heckington was generally known as 'the Horsfords' Mr. Rawdon.' Of this, I alone, wrote word to Willy Enmore."

"In order to exasperate him farther against the family?"

"In hopes to make him resign himself to what was inevitable. I told him, too, that the Horsfords were sinking in public estimation; that Lady Armstead, instead

of turning out the highflier we all anticipated, had trained by a certain little quiet friend of hers and into a model wife; — that several of the scampish were settling down into professions; — and that (the least pretty and most foolish of the girls, was) to marry. — I said all I decently could, in order to reconcile him to Arthur's choice."

"There will be no further need of your championship *now*," said Miss Corbet, with a heavy sigh.

"Pardon me, my dear. If I cared to go on fighting their battles, I should have work enough on my hands with my cousin Jane. I really believe she has kept alive through all her affliction, by her animosity to the people at Cleveland. Now that, by his late accession of fortune in addition to the reversion of Heckington, Arthur has become entitled to an Honourable Mrs. Raw or a Lady Clementina, she is more resolved than ever against those fluttering, flirting Horsfords, without connection or fortune to supply the place of higher qualifications."

Cleveland, meanwhile, experienced considerable relief, that, as Tiny had migrated to London, its son-in-law had preferred the seclusion of Northover to the indulgence of his fraternal remorse. Mr. Raw, in deep mourning and deep affliction, would have been a restraint upon its pastimes, and prevented their exhibiting the kaleidoscope to Charles Turberville in the brilliant colours likely to dazzle his inexperienced eye.

oam about Heckington' in company with Henry Corbet, canning the timber, surveying the crops, grubbing up edgerows, draining ponds, or mooning round the old deserted gardens, was a very suitable occupation for an engaged young man, depressed by recent news of the death of an opulent only brother.

For it was that qualifying adjective which alone imparted interest, in the mind of Mrs. Horsford, to the memory of poor Willy Enmore. An impersonation of the Fredville plantations arrayed in a black coat and rape hatband, haunted her imagination; and in the round of visits, both as debtor and creditor, in an extensive neighbourhood, her masterly modulation of voice into the *sourdine* becoming the "mitigated affliction" of the family, was worthy the proprietor of a mourning-shop.

"I am happy to say that dear Arthur is as well as can be expected after such a loss," was her reply to the good-natured inquiries of Mrs. Walker, the Rectoress of her parish. "A very fine young man, ma'am; a very *harming* young man."

"Remarkably handsome, certainly," replied Mrs. Walker, concluding dear Arthur to be the antecedent.

"I was alluding to the late Mr. William Enmore — whom I don't think you ever saw. — He will come into nearly five thousand a-year."

"I beg your pardon," said the puzzled Rectoress, "I understood that the last mail brought news of his decease?"

"I am *now* alluding to Mr. Rawdon of Heckington. When the death of his mother places him in the enjoyment of his ancestral estate, he will be at the head of something like ten thousand a-year."

"I am truly rejoiced to hear it," rejoined the Clerman's wife; who, knowing how much her husband managed to do for the benefit of his fellow-creatures of five hundred, found her organs of benevolence, like as they were, inadequate to calculate the appropriateness of such a mine of Christian virtue.

But it was not on Sunday-schools, or penny-churches, but opera-boxes and diamond-tiaras Mrs. Horsford was intent. She had been defrauded by Sir James Armstrong of the perquisites lawfully accruing to the mother of a young woman of fashion; and, looming in the distance she now beheld a charming house in Belgravia, presided over by a beautiful Mrs. Rawdon, with an airy room on the extra story reserved exclusively for "mamma."

Little did poor Arthur surmise the destiny thus projected for him, as he wandered under his fine old oak, cursing the day which, by designating him Rawdon Heckington, had created a barrier between him and his poor lost brother; the fine, upright, manly being, whose company and affections he had renounced, to be dragged about, tamely, in a *lasso*, by the cunning of Cleveland. "Willy must have been a noble fellow, or he would not have started off without a grain of rancour in his heart to visit him in Switzerland! Willy must have been

noble fellow; or he would not be so loved and grieved over by his gentle, but high-minded cousin."

The only solace he found for his self-upbraidings, was in listening to Mr. Corbet's thrice-told tale of poor William's fondness for Heckington; and the desire he had manifested to apportion a part of his income to its maintenance and improvement.

"We must try to find out all he intended to have done," Arthur would at length reply, in a tremulous voice. "Perhaps Tiny can inform us. Perhaps that old witch, Lucretia Rawdon, may know what were his fancies on the subject. We must endeavour to comply with them all. A poor reparation, my dear Mr. Corbet, a tardy reparation, — but all I have to offer."

As the time for the arrival of the West Indian mail drew near, Arthur became more and more depressed. His voice was broken, his conversation incoherent. If the expected letters were able to bring a voice from the grave, or the reproachful spectre of his brother, the prospect of their arrival could not have rendered him more nervous. But as he seemed content to roam from morning till night about the plantations and park, sometimes with a fishing-rod in his hand, — sometimes a book, — by way of announcement that he was in no want of companionship, Mr. Corbet did not apologise for neglecting none of his customary avocations on his account.

The Horsfords, however, seemed to consider that

they must not relax their grasp upon him. T before the Jamaica mail became due, they d Northover, on pretence of friendly enquiries re Miss Corbet's return from town; and affected the surprise to find Arthur still lingering at Heckingt

"They fancied his presence must have been i by his mother. They fancied that business co with the late melancholy event would have lc called him away. They had been daily expect hear from dear Amy that he had been to visit h such an emergency, the advice and assistance James would be invaluable; and of course anyb everybody belonging to *them* would be overjoyed t the least service to him." Mrs. Horsford trusted t dear Arthur was fully aware of the affections which their whole family took in his affliction.

A deep, deep quivering sigh escaped his o bosom, in token, perhaps, of his consciousness ho a share that family had exercised in producing i he said not a word.

"At all events, when you go to town, you w sult Sir James?" persisted Mrs. Horsford, who had written to her son-in-law bespeaking his influence half of Florence, and as much information con the Fredville property as he was able to extor Arthur. So little insight into the character of Si had she obtained from their three years' intimacy *imagine* he would stoop to paltry manoeuvres

benefit of any mother or sister-in-law on the face of the earth! —

“I have as yet had neither leisure nor inclination to think of business,” replied Arthur coldly. “A time will come when it must force itself on my attention — always so soon.”

“At all events, my dearest Arthur, you will come and pass a day with us on your way to London?” interposed Florence, whose gay bonnet, sprinkled with roses, — pink cheeks sprinkled with dimples, — and bright eyes glancing with ill-repressed glee, — appeared to his heavy heart singularly unaccordant with his wounded feelings, and suit of sables.

“Not yet awhile, Flo. Excuse me just now. I am not fit for your gay circle. I should only be a killjoy.”

“But we have no gay circle, I assure you. Mr. Turberville and Bob are gone to Goodwood.”

“A little later, then, I will join you.”

“But on your return from town, we shall be absent from home. We talk of going to Cowes, for the Regatta.”

“Later still, then. Better for all of us that we should wait. I am much too miserable for company.”

Mrs. Horsford now broke in with her vulgar trivial common-place exhortations; explaining that it was his duty to exert himself, for his own sake, and the sake of those to whom he was dear: that tears would not restore the dead, *and that it was tempting Providence to rebel*

against its decrees. Buzzing like a troublesome insect about his face, her silliness seemed to trifle with his sorrow. And oh! if the fools of this world would but understand how offensive appear their stale moralising to a mind which the hand of God is preparing by so severe visitation that the seeds of Virtue and Wisdom may hereafter fructify in the soil, they would spare the shallow admonitions and useless importunities! —

On receiving no response to the well-worded phrase which she had conned, that morning, out of a volume entitled "Consolation to Mourners," (which, as its blank leaf binding seemed out of place in the library, was lying by among her bugle-trimmings and jet-ornaments,) she tried, as a last resource to charm him into society, a long message to Tiny.

But even that attempt at conciliation proved abortive.

"If you or Florence have anything to say to him," said he, "better write by the post. It is uncertain whether I may see my cousin. She is in Hertford Street with my mother, into whose presence I have no thought of intruding."

"Not see Mrs. Enmore?" exclaimed Florence, aghast.

"And talk of *intruding* into her presence at such a crisis?" echoed her mother. "Why, it is the very element, Arthur, to regain your influence over her mind! Softened as she doubtless is by affliction, *now* is the moment of time to effect a reconciliation. — And I must say, you owe it to Florence to seize such an opportunity :

ringing your engagement to a happy termination. Two whole years has that poor dear girl been kept in a state of suspense, of all uncertainties the most trying to the sensitive, delicate nature of a young woman of her age; and I do really think —”

“Be satisfied!” — interrupted Arthur — his face glowing with emotions any thing but tender. “I will take every step that is due to your daughter. I will neglect no effort that becomes an honourable man. But I am persuaded, madam, that Florence and I would understand each other better, and, as regards my own feelings, I am certain I should be far more eager in hastening our union, if you interfered less between us.”

He spoke so coldly, — so almost sternly, — that neither mother nor daughter had courage to prolong the discussion. They were forced to lay down their arms. Instead of carrying Arthur Rawdon back triumphantly to Cleveland, as they had intended, a close prisoner in their barouche, they returned as fretful and anxious as they came, indulging in mutual recriminations.

Even Mr. Corbet, though an unobservant man, was struck by the despairing aspect of his nephew-in-law on the eve of his departure for town. Seldom does the space of a fortnight operate so fearful a change as was apparent in the young man's pallid face and languid movements. The susceptibility of Creole nature rendered him *peculiarly subject to nervous irritation*; and ab-

stinence and want of rest had wrought their effects.

“Good bye, my dear boy,” said the kind man, grasping his hand at parting. “But for of mercy, Arthur, take care of yourself. We have you following the steps of poor Willy. V afford to lose you! —”

How different would Mrs. Hordford have the preservation of the only life now intervening Heckington and a child of her own!

It was the week of Goodwood Races; when the End of London, deserted by its fashionable people, exhibits only dust and disarray. Arthur Rawdon his Chambers in the Albany, unmolested by the sight of a single familiar face. But there, he was startled by the sight of a letter lying on his table, having a sable which was to its extent, as the proportions of spendthrift's book on the Leger to his fortune, — covering it by seven-eighths. — The West India telegraphed off the Needles the preceding night, arrived in town half a day sooner than was expected.

And alas! the news it brought was many *worse* than expected. — His brother had been of life, not by the will of God, but by the ruthlessness of an assassin! —

In a tropical country, where malignant fevers and cholera are rife, sudden death is so frequent a occurrence, that little suspicion had been excited at F

at of the young European so lately established there. In prime of health, one week, — dead, the next, have comprised his story, but that something in papers he left behind, something in his hurried mode executing a will previously prepared, alarmed the suspicions of Mr. Harman. A post-mortem examination confirmed his apprehensions; and after the despatch of a letter to Mrs. Enmore, an inquest had been held, the verdict was in sad accordance with the foresight of the agent.

William Enmore, Esq. of Fredville was pronounced to have "Died from the effects of poison, administered by person or persons unknown."

But for what object was the crime accomplished? Who could possibly be interested in promoting his ruin? "I" faltered Arthur, letting the letter which brought this torturing intelligence, fall to the ground. "Harman is a prudent man, if his accounts were in default; — and he is a very man who provokes the inquiry: — myself his only heir, — and God knows how willingly, how ready, I would redeem poor Willy's life with my

"The report of the coroner's inquest," wrote Mr. Harman, "being far too voluminous for the post, shall be transmitted in a separate packet, through the Custom-house, together with a copy of the will of your late father, (of which I find myself appointed sole executor,) to my correspondents Messrs. Harman and Wrottesley,

of Bedford Square, the solicitors of your late fat
Being a little uncertain, sir, concerning your address
forward this letter to Hertford Street, under cover
Mrs. Enmore."

To jump into a Hansom, and drive to Bedford Square was the work of a moment. Not, however, from any solicitude respecting the will; for, even could he be spared a thought from the fate of his brother, he believed that each possessed only a life-interest in his property, with benefit of survivorship to both. But arriving at the office of Harman and Wrottesley, he found his application premature. The papers were at in the Southampton Customhouse.

"Messrs. Harman would have the honour to apprise Mr. Rawdon the moment they arrived. They would probably be delayed a day or two; the mail bag being forwarded, by boat, some time before the steamer reaches the docks."

Two dreary miserable days, — two days alone in his lonely chambers! — Better have remained at Northover wandering about the thymy park. *Almost* both have repaired to Cleveland, to be frankincensed by Mr. Horsford and her crafty offspring.

CHAPTER XXII.

FOR the sick or the sorrowful, London is certainly a ungenial place of sojourn. Its noise is the noisiest, — its smoke is the smokiest, — its dust is the most irritating, that molests the human senses in almost any European city. Even in those dull chambers in the Albany into which the sun penetrates but half-an-hour in the twenty-four, straggling in like a reluctant visitor watching the first opportunity to escape, — there was enough of London and its ways to make poor Arthur shrink from its hollowness.

When, therefore, on the morning of the second day, a letter was placed in his hand addressed in Miss Corbet's handwriting, his heart leapt within him. In the great wilderness, he had felt so wretchedly alone, that though Mr. Corbet had evidently broken his promise not to apprise the family in Hertford Street of his arrival in town, the lapse of faith was readily forgiven; even though his presence was so earnestly claimed by his cousin, as to admit of no excuse.

Rumours of the violent death of poor Willy had reached Mrs. Enmore; and it was to Arthur the frantic mother was already looking to avenge the murder of her son. — *An abridged report of the inquest had been*

copied by some London evening paper from the Spanish Town Gazette; and letters of condolence had consequently poured in, both to Lucretia and her aunt, entreating particulars which they were as yet unable to afford.

"Come and advise with us, my dearest cousin. You are all that is left to us now," was poor Tiny's touching address. "Whatever you may have to resent against my aunt, forget it at such a moment. We ought to be together."

But it was to obtain, rather than communicate information, he hastened to obey the summons. For a fortnight past, Arthur had scarcely looked at a newspaper; and the paragraph which had enlightened Mrs Enmore's gossiping acquaintance, had escaped her ear.

He found Miss Corbet anxiously awaiting him, in the little library formerly apportioned to the use of his brother, that she might forestal his interview with her aunt. But they met not as they had parted. She received him without tears. She had wept herself calm. Though the contrast of her black dress seemed to render her colourless face almost ghastly, as she related the painful particulars which had reached them, no considerable emotion betrayed her deep-felt anguish.

It appeared that on William Enmore's arrival in the West Indies, he found, as in the case of most minors and absentees, the state of his property such as to necessitate stringent measures of Reform. He who had carried over with him from the land of liberty with

German University, extravagant projects of melioration and beneficence, was compelled to renounce his romantic philanthropy, and adopt the opinion of his agents, that enfranchised slaves can never become as free men; and that some generations must elapse before the coloured race can be legislated for on equal terms with the white.

Still, though for the sake of himself and his property young Enmore had been compelled to measures of reform which rendered him highly unpopular, and convinced the malcontents of the Fredville plantation that his authority was less pleasant to cope with than the yoke of the inert Harmans, he little suspected that more than one among them had decided that he must instantly return to Europe; that the climate of the West Indies must be made to disagree with him, as it had previously done with his mother.

Had any one suggested to him, during the first few days of his illness, the existence of such a conspiracy, he would have scouted it as ridiculous. In that pestiferous climate, mortal ailment is of such sudden growth, that he believed himself to be sickening for the yellow fever; which, as Lucretia had asserted, was raging in the island. Not a moment did he lose in despatching a messenger to Spanish Town for the best medical advice. But he summoned also his agent and his agent's solicitor, to draw out and attest his will; and before the physician in attendance was admitted to his presence, *that duty was fulfilled.*

But though his presentiments respecting the of his disease proved erroneous, the doctor, acc to combat the terrible epidemic, declared that he rather have had to contend with it than with t terious disorder by which Mr. Enmore was affect days and nights, his medical attendant did not chamber. Yet, in spite of every remedy, the languished and languished, sinking under an un able atrophy. His hair fell off, — his face becan — When he expired, after ten days' suffering, h have passed for an elderly man.

So subtle is the action of the vegetable po use in the West Indies and South American Stat so difficult of detection, that, though suspicion cited even before the death of the victim, th would never have been authenticated but from t punction of one of its perpetrators. They l intended to destroy, but to incapacitate young . the tyrant son of the Fredville tyrant tradition horred; and when, to their surprise and horror instead of disease was the result of their attemp mutual recriminations were overheard, reports searched into, by the very man whose careless : tration was the origin of the mischief.

"That so noble a young man should have l crificed by a gang of dastardly ruffians," was th paper comment on the details of the inquest, '

need an unexampled feeling of sympathy throughout the Island of Jamaica."

"You will find your mother a little unreasonable. But what ought she not to be pardoned at such a moment!" said Miss Corbet, after Arthur had deliberately perused the papers which Mrs. Enmore had compelled Lucretia Rawdon to procure, that she might drink her cup of misery to the dregs. "She insists that our poor lost one has been sacrificed to the unpopularity of his father."

"The feeling always uppermost in her mind about us, Tiny, is, that we are the children of wrath, the offspring of malice and revenge. — She thinks we ought never to have been born!"

"Promise me, at all events, before you see her, that you will not allow any appeal she may make to your feelings, to incite you into rushing out to Jamaica to promote further spilling of blood! — If the crime be proved, the Law of the land is not apt to deal leniently with malefactors of the class under suspicion. If you love me, *if you love me*, dear Arthur, do not visit the West Indies for an act of vengeance! — Do not risk the last precious life that is left to us! — You are already ill — weak — desponding. — Do not risk your life!" —

How deeply he was touched by this pleading, and by the low, tender, earnest tones in which it was expressed, Arthur Rawdon did not care to show. But his silence was wholly misinterpreted by his cousin.

"I can understand well that it will be on you a sacrifice," said she. "For all your seeming coldness towards Arthur, for all the ungraciousness towards Willy which you allowed yourself to be urged by Robert Ford, you loved him dearly at heart. You have deeply repented having wounded his feelings. And as an act of atonement, you would fain sacrifice your own life, your own credit, your own safety and happiness, in order to witness the punishment of the wrongdoers who have taken him from us. But will that comfort him? — Will that comfort his departed spirit? — no! no! — Such retaliation, dear Arthur, is only a craving for blood. Such retaliation, my dear, my cousin, does but perpetuate evil. Spare us this anxiety. Your mother's old age must not be bereaved. Your poor cousin must not have to mourn the loss of her last, last friend!"

From this painful interview, ending on both sides with tears, Arthur Rawdon was summoned to the presence of his mother. But from *her* tenderness, he had nothing to fear. With her, grief and anger were synonymous. Mary Tudor on her throne, Alva in his Cabinet, would not have denounced more vindictively the miserable ignorant negroes who had but followed the instinct of their nature as cruel as her own. She would fain have seen dozens of lives sacrificed in atonement of a deed, he would indeed, in its results, but distinct from premeditated assassination. By way of what she called a w

and example, she wanted whole families at Fredville to be exterminated; their homes burned, their gardens rooted up. She wanted to visit hate with hatred, crime with crime, as in the worst retaliations of war.

"If you ever loved your unfortunate brother, which sometimes doubt," said she, "or if you respect your father's memory, which I more than doubt, you owe it to *them*, Arthur, and you owe it to me, to start by the next mail for the West Indies, and stir up the energy of the local tribunals. That pitiful Harman evidently thinks that because these wretches only intended to ruin the health of your brother, not to take his life, (though his life they took as effectually as if they had shot him through the head), they ought to escape punishment."

"We have, at present, mother, no evidence that such is his opinion," replied Arthur, his own feelings of indignation almost subdued by her unwomanly ferocity. "We must wait till further particulars are before us."

"Wait, wait, always *wait!*" was her fretful cry. Just the argument of Lucretia and Sophy Corbet; those two, to whom poor Willy was so kind, and who seem to care nothing about him now he is in his grave. When I thought my son had fallen a victim to the climate — to an epidemic — I resigned myself to the will of God; for against His heavy hand rebellion is sin. But now that I know he was murdered, I cannot submit, — *I will not submit.* He shall be revenged. — A life

shall be given for his life, Arthur, or my own will the forfeit!" —

"He shall have *justice*, mother," answered her in a sturdy voice. "More, he himself would never have desired."

"You refuse, then, to go to Jamaica? You have made up your mind not to investigate on the spot the details of this horrible affair?"

"I refuse nothing. All I desire is better information before I leave England."

"All you desire is a pretext to linger among the contemptible Horsfords!" cried Mrs. Enmore, a flush of rage tinging her sallow cheeks. Her son uttered not a syllable. An interdictory gesture from Tiny, who was standing behind his mother's chair, warned him to forbear. Nor, had he known to how many imputations, equally unjust, his cousin had submitted in silence, would he have overrated the tax on his patience.

A moment afterwards, Miss Corbet was called into the room.

"A gentleman wished to speak with her on business. In obeying the summons, she entertained little suspicion that it was a pretext devised by Lucretia to secure to the mother and son an uninterrupted *à-tête*.

On returning to the library she had recently entered, however, she found herself mistaken. A mysterious stranger, holding in his hands papers of so

m that she instinctively connected them with the interest at Spanish Town, sat there awaiting her.

"I am speaking, I believe, to Mr. Harman, of Bedford Square?" said she, faintly.

"To his managing clerk, Madam. On leaving home this morning, Mr. Lewis Harman charged me that, should certain papers arrive from Southampton during his absence, I was to attend to them without delay. He then supposed, Madam, that he should be instructed to forward them to Mr. Arthur Rawdon, of Heckington, now residing in the Albany. They are, however, addressed to yourself."

The heavy packet, sealed with three large black seals, which he now presented, was in itself an object far from cheering. The trembling hands of poor Tiny were quite unequal to the task of breaking them.

"We have, moreover, private instructions from our correspondent, Mr. Philip Harman, of Spanish Town," added the precise legal subordinate, "to place an enclosed copy of the will of the late William Enmore, Esq., of Fredville, in the Island of Jamaica, (of which he is sole executor), in the hands of counsel; to determine whether it will be necessary to take out probate in England, as well as in the Colonial Consistory Court."

Poor Tiny sat speechless and motionless, deaf to his professional jargon. A will was too formal a document to interest *her feelings*. For she held in her hand a *sealed letter*, a voluminous one, which had accompanied

the huge document now lying on the library table; a letter addressed in the ordinary handwriting of her cousin, and sealed with his ordinary seal; a letter written immediately after his fatal seizure, and bearing on the envelope instructions that it should be delivered to Miss Corbet only in the event of his decease.

It was consequently as a voice from the dead! —

And how, with such a missive in her hand, was she to listen to the technicalities of a tedious lawyer's clerk!

Conscious, however, of the importance of his mission, he went prosing on, while Miss Corbet, with her white, despairing face, sat gazing on vacancy. She did not even notice the opening of the door, when Arthur, despatched by his mother to ascertain whether her niece's visitor were not some person connected with the Frelville despatch, made his appearance.

There was no mistaking the accuracy of Mrs. Ermore's surmise. The voluminous folio on the table, the unopened letter in her hand, the grief-stricken countenance of his cousin, certified the errand of the solemn-looking stranger.

"From Mr. Harman?" faltered Arthur, unceremoniously addressing him.

"Mr. Rawdon of Heckington, I presume?" demanded the clerk, after an affirmative bow. "I have waited, Sir, upon Miss Corbet, according to the instructions of my principal, acting for his correspondent at Spanish Town, to remit to her a copy of the proceedings of the inquest

old upon your late lamented brother; as well as to make an appointment with the young lady for the reading of the copy remitted to us, of his last Will and testament."

"Your application, Sir, would, I think, have been more fittingly made to *myself*," rejoined Arthur, haughtily. "You must perceive that Miss Corbet is not just now in a state to be intruded upon."

"Still, Sir, as we are instructed to take counsel's opinion on several points of the will, and as no time is to be lost —"

"Mr. Lewis Harman wrote to me as if uncertain of my address, which is probably the cause of your indiscreet intrusion on my cousin. But I am now here, and at your orders; or, if you prefer it, you can accompany me to my chambers in the Albany."

Unabashed by the peremptory tone of Mr. Rawdon, and with the dry self-possession of a man of the law conscious that he has the best of the case, the ceremonious clerk replied that he was quite ready to wait Miss Corbet's pleasure; — that he would return in the evening, if it suited her better; — or that Mr. Harman himself would wait upon her at any hour she pleased on the morrow.

"Did my mother commission you, Tiny, to see this person, or his employer?" said Arthur, drawing nearer to her, and addressing her in a very different tone from the one he had just been employing. But as he approached her, he saw unopened in her hand the

letter addressed to her in poor Willy's well-known handwriting. — He was startled. — His breath came short.

"You are of course aware, sir," resumed the same clerk, a little indignant at being called "this pen" and in a tone so disparaging, — "that our Mr. Harman is acting for the executor of the late Mr. Enmore's estate by whom we have been placed in communication with this lady, his residuary legatee; and now, by his sole representative of the Fredville property."

"Even armed with such authority," cried Arthur Rawdon, retaining sufficient self-command to conceal the presence of a stranger his utter want of preparation for the announcement, "you have no right to intrude on Miss Corbet, unsummoned and unsanctioned by her father. At such a moment," he continued, pointing to the mirror of the inquest which lay on the table, "she naturally wishes to be alone. She must have leisure to examine the papers you have brought. When Mr. Harman's attendance is required, I will take care that he is sent for."

A peremptory ring of the bell which brought Harding into the room to receive orders for opening the door, was a significant conclusion to this address. Not remaining for the discomfited representative of Harman and Co. but to pick up his hat and depart: resolving that if a certain Arthur Rawdon, Esq. of Heckington, Herts, ever came within grip of their office should not escape without leaving on its briars a tatters of his fleece.

CHAPTER XXIII.

AFTER his hasty exit, the cousins were some minutes alone together, before either of them stirred or spoke.

At length, Arthur extended his hand towards the Inquest papers, of which the seals were still unbroken.

"Let me spare you the pain of reading these, Tiny," said he. "There may be details too dreadful to meet your eye. — I will submit them to you afterwards, if they contain a single word calculated to afford you comfort."

Miss Corbet nodded assent.

"It *may* be, that you will have to act in this wretched business. It may be, that on *you* will devolve the duty of prosecuting the murderers. You heard that fellow's statement just now? — You know, — perhaps you knew before, — that you have become poor Willy's representative?"

"He said so. But there must be some mistake. It is impossible."

"I should have thought so, but that my brother's solicitor is our informant. I was not aware that Willy possessed the power of disposal over my father's property."

"Nor if he did, would he have alienated it from his family. Either this man has blundered; or — But why

talk or think of it now? — Let us first ascertain by what cruel, wicked means he has been lost to us."

"And your letter — your own letter — *his* letter, Tiny. — Will you not read it? — Perhaps you had rather be alone?" —

"No — do not leave me. I cannot open it, — I dare not open it!" she exclaimed, clasping her hands and bursting into an agony of tears, while the letter fell from her lap upon the ground. After silently replacing it, Arthur withdrew to the window, — either that he might be no restraint on her emotions, or to conceal his own.

At length, returning towards his cousin and assuming a seat by her side, he reminded her, with the affectionate earnestness of a brother, that the painful task from which she recoiled, was a matter of duty; that she owed it both to the living and the dead, to acquaint herself with his last wishes, and preside over their execution.

"The letter," said he, "contains perhaps an explanation of the bequest which Harman has announced. Written during my brother's last illness and in contemplation of death, he may even have adverted to the nature of his attack, and surmised the perpetrators of the crime."

"Then read it for me — read it to me yourself," — she replied, placing it with averted eyes in his hand. "The sight of his handwriting blinds me. — Oh! my poor Willy!"

And again, tears burst in torrents from her sobbing heart.

Arthur no longer hesitated to break the seal. But on glancing at the letter, he paused.

"No," said he, — "this ought to be read only by yourself. You may repent hereafter, Tiny, that you took me into your confidence. There may be expressions, — there may be allusions not intended to meet the eye of a third person." —

"Read — read" — murmured Miss Corbet, "there need be no reserves between us. Willy and I were faithful friends, — as brother and sister, — nothing more. — Take his place with me, Arthur. Be my friend, — my brother. Read the letter. Tell me all he has appointed for me to do."

Thus adjured, he could no longer refuse. But it was in a hurried and almost inarticulate manner, — in a voice tremulous with suppressed tears, — that he gave utterance to the following words: —

"When this reaches your hand, my own Tiny, the poor hand that traces it will be at rest. I have suffered and am suffering horribly: — so horribly, that the word Rest has assumed a comforting sound. The doctors seemed puzzled about my illness, and declare that it is not, as I at first fancied, the first stage of cholera or yellow fever. — No matter. Death is the end of all; as I have felt and known from the first spasm that tortured my miserable frame.

"Therefore, Tiny, therefore, *dear* Tiny, accept my last farewell and blessing, — my last, last thought in this world. I have bequeathed you everything I possess. Had not the evil destiny been upon us which seems to attach to our race, what joy to have shared with you, my heart's idol, all that it is my consolation, in dying, to secure to your enjoyment! —

"But the fates were against me. That accursed name of Rawdon of Heckington has stood between us like a wall of flint! —

"Do me the justice to remember, however, that, *dear* as you have been to me from early girlhood until now, never have I profited by our hours of closest intimacy to breathe the slightest avowal of my attachment. — I told you once, — how well I remember it, — that I had overheard a compact between my mother and her own to repair the injury you had sustained in the loss of Heckington, by a marriage with Arthur. I told you how, that very moment, I swore in the depths of my heart never to oppose a measure so likely to assure *his* happiness and the future credit of our name. For even then, I loved you. Even then, I saw in my little cousin the germ of every womanly charm and excellence which time has so brightly developed. But I remained true to my oath. Half my hatred of Bob Horsford arose from seeing him abet the paltry manoeuvres by which that odious family ensnared my boy-brother. That time and reason would work his cure, and open his eyes to the

charm of your purer nature, I could not but believe; and deeply regretted the violent opposition by which my mother stimulated his obstinate nature into perseverance. But not the less did I persist in my resolution never, till the marriage was really accomplished, to let my feelings and wishes create an additional obstacle to your becoming what I had so often called you in sport, — ‘Mrs. Rawdon of Heckington.’

“Had I then thought of Arthur as he has since compelled me to think, — as arrogant, cold-hearted, and graceless, — far fitter for the frivolous Florence Horsford than for my precious Tiny, — I should have been less scrupulous. — My conscience would scarcely have restrained my passionate attachment. I might have been happy. We might have been happy. The cold, cold hand of death now heavy on my heart, might, perhaps, perhaps, have spared me! —

“At the office of the Horsmans in Bedford Square, will be found the draught of a settlement of half my property upon my brother, which was to have been executed, last autumn, on the attainment of my majority, had not my advances been so savagely checked. Driven from his door, insulted by that empty parasite his future brother-in-law, whom he preferred to his own flesh and blood, — he disowned me then, as I disown him *now*! — Even on the brink of the grave, Tiny, I cannot forgive Arthur Rawdon.

“For my poor old mother, I need not bespeak your

kindness. I have witnessed how you bear and forbear with her. To old Lucretia, who served me so often my intermediary with the dear little Sophy Corbet and loved as the child of her favourite cousin, I have had substantial proofs of remembrance. The only other living thing I have to commend to your goodwill is my pet Spitz Fridolin; whom my mother condemned to the stables during my happy visit to Hertford Street last year, and whom Tiny will perhaps house for my sake — Poor brute! — he seems to know that his master is writing about him, so wistfully does he sit looking into my face! —

“And now, my child, — my sister, — my wife that should have been, — a long, long farewell! — Be happy dear dear Tiny. Live to be the guardian angel of all around you, as God knows, you were created to be. I do not ask you to reside at Fredville; the climate might prove as pernicious to you as it did to my mother, and is now doing to myself. But see that my poor people are mercifully dealt with: — above all, that they are taught and civilised, as well as clothed and fed.

“I have written this at long intervals, — racked by pain, — and so strengthless that even to form the letters is a labour, — therefore forgive my incoherency, — and give my —”

Arthur Rawdon paused abruptly. But he had done so more than once in endeavouring to decypher the imperfect writing of his dying brother. Miss Corbet was

still waited, with every pulse throbbing, — every
thrilling, for the concluding words of the letter.

Alas! there was nothing more! Physical anguish,
red more poignant by the prospect of dying without
consoling word from kindred lips, without one inter-
ge of tenderness or trust with the being so dear to
had probably aggravated his sufferings. For the
had evidently been precipitately closed and ad-
ed, lest it should be left to the perusal of the
gers by whom his death-bed was surrounded.

With a thousand sensations of regret and remorse
gling in his heart, Arthur slowly re-folded the
, and restored it to his cousin; who, mechanically,
without glancing towards him, placed it within the
of her black dress, — close, *close* to her heart.

You are right," said he, in a faint voice. "That
must not be seen by my mother. — It would
her heart as it has mine. — It proves *her* to have
as much his enemy as myself. You are the only
n in this house, Tiny, intitled to mourn for Willy:
ou, his true unfailing friend!" —

He spoke hurriedly; for footsteps were approaching
oor. Angry and impatient, Mrs. Enmore had des-
ed Lucretia to ascertain what was going on.

You are not equal, just now, my dear cousin, to an
view with my mother," said Mr. Rawdon, interposing
en *them*. "Go to your own room, and compose
gton. I.

yourself. I will acquaint her with all that is new for her to know."

Softened as he was by the perusal of his dying words, it produced a painful revulsion of to perceive how much more interested was his mother the intelligence he had to communicate concerning the disposal of the Fredville estate, than in the details of the Inquest, which, on rejoining her in the drawing room, he proposed to read to her. She kept interrupting him every moment by inquiries which, at present, he was unprepared to answer. All he could tell respecting his brother's testamentary dispositions, was that Tiny was his heiress.

At the moment, it struck him as extraordinary that this astounding and unlooked-for fact, instead of exciting her indignation, seemed to afford her pleasure. — He had prepared himself for an outcry of indignation that the property of the Enmore family should be assigned to an alien. Instead of which, she seemed more than satisfied with so partial a distribution of their inheritance.

"It is your own doing, Arthur," said she. "If you had not exasperated your brother by rejecting his affectionate advances, last summer, you would have been in possession of all."

It was clear, however, that she indulged in maternal regrets; nor was it till some hours afterwards when he had resigned her to the care of Lancelot and Tiny to the better restoratives of solitude and

that he explained to himself Mrs. Enmore's singular indifference to his interests, by the fact that his disinheri-
tance would prevent his immediate marriage with Florence Horsford.

That was, at present, her reigning antipathy. That her surviving son, sole representative of the Rawdons of Heckington, should be deprived of the property which would have enabled him to fulfil his engagements with a family of designing adventurers, fully reconciled her to the alienation of the Fredville estate.

Of two evils, she thankfully accepted the lesser.


"But what is to become of Tiny?" inquired Lucretia Rawdon, when, the following day, Mrs. Enmore imparted to her a portion of all she had learned from her son. "Is *she* to go over to Jamaica and be poisoned, like our darling? — Or will she return to Northover, and inspect the weaning of calves and churning of butter, cousin Jane, till the Almighty calls you to himself, and restores Heckington to its rightful owner? — Or will Henry Corbet resign his agency? — I only wish the Chancellor would appoint me in his place! I'm sure he'd be puzzled to find a more vigilant guardian."

"These are early days to decide upon any thing," replied Mrs. Enmore, whose spirits were gradually reviving, now that, as she herself phrased it, she "*knew the worst.*" — "All I can say is, that if Tiny wishes for a home *under any other* roof than her father's, she *may command it under mine.* I have no dearer wish

than to keep her with me till she forms a suitable marriage."

Mrs. Enmore judiciously kept to herself that *her* notion of a suitable marriage for Sophia Corbet of Fredville was with Arthur Rawdon of Heckington. — Whatever pledges he might forfeit, or whatever hearts he might break, *she*, at least, was ready to sanction the alliance! —

END OF VOL. I.



Continued

COLLECTION
OF
BRITISH AUTHORS.
VOL. CCCCXXXII.

HECKINGTON BY MRS. GORE.

IN TWO VOLUMES.

VOL. II





HECKINGTON.

VOL. II.

CHAPTER I.

“MY late client would, I am certain, have refrained from many explanations he has seen fit to make in this testamentary document,” said Mr. Harman, of Bedford square, after reciting to Miss Corbet, shortly afterwards, the contents of William Enmore’s will, “had he been aware of the publicity necessarily attached to such instruments. He adverts, as he should scarcely have done in a legal paper, to the motives of dissension between him and his brother; as well as to the possibility that Miss Corbet may wish to repudiate his princely bequest (nearer five thousand per annum, my dear madam, than four!) and provides against any such contingency, leaving the Fredville estates, in remainder, to her brother Alfred Corbet of Grenfield House; or in case of his death during his minority, or afterwards intestate, and unmarried, to his younger brother Edgar — both, as I conceive, *aliens to him in blood*. — But it is much

to be regretted that he has coupled with this strong demonstration of attachment to one relative, and estrangement from his next of kin, certain strong animadversions on family unconnected with his own. No one, in my opinion, has a right to vilify another in a document destined to publicity."

"And you are certain," was Miss Corbet's reply to this lengthy harangue, "that there is no way of setting aside this will, and restoring the property to the rightful heir?"

"None whatever. If wills could be cancelled by survivors, where would be the use of such instruments? — We have read, in history, of Kings who destroyed the wills of their predecessors. In private life," added the lawyer with a grim smile, — "such an act would come within reach of the criminal law. In the will before us, several persons are interested. Your cousin, Mrs. Lucretia Rawdon takes an annuity of a hundred a-year, and the due payment of Mrs. Enmore's jointure of eighteen hundred, rests with the executor, — my late father having been her trustee. — Your youngest brother, a child of tender age, has a reversionary interest in the whole. In short, my dear madam, all that remains for us is to apply for probate, here, as it has been already granted in the Colonial Court; and my brother will have the pleasure of inducting you, or whosoever you may appoint as your representative, into possession of the property: — or, if you prefer it, remitting to you the

early, through my hands, the annual product, as well as the balance sheet of his accounts."

Already ill and flurried, poor Tiny looked thoroughly overcome by this announcement. A Druidess with the black veil of condemnation over her head, could scarcely have been more weighed down than Sophia Corbet by her compulsory heiressship! — To be in possession for life of nearly five thousand a year, of which two thousand five hundred were in immediate enjoyment, was, to a person reared within the narrow horizon of Grenfield House, like succeeding to the revenues of an Empire. — but it afforded her no satisfaction. This unsought wealth was the bequeathment of her dead cousin. This unsought wealth ought to have been the property of another.

Of Arthur's sentiments concerning his brother's will, he had no means of judging. He was giving himself up so entirely to consultations with medical and legal authorities concerning the evidence brought forward on the inquest, and the means of wreaking the utmost vigour of the law on the wretches it had served to unmask, that little was seen of him in Hertford Street. But it struck his cousin with some surprise that, when thanking her for her liberal though abortive intentions towards him, of which he had been apprised by Harman (who described Miss Sophia Corbet as a very charming young lady, but so romantic and ignorant of business that it was fortunate she had fallen into honourable

hands,) he added to his acknowledgment of her generosity — "Best as it is, Tiny, — *best* as it is! — In all respects, Willy has shown himself my superior. In all respects, Willy's elections have been judicious. If possible now, I shall be rich enough in my old age, — the only time when riches are indispensable. Best as it is!"

To be an heiress, therefore, Sophia Corbet was forced to resign herself; but it was not till she found the wish unassailable, and her own desire to renounce the inheritance unaccomplishable, that she contemplated with her father tidings of the golden shower which had fallen upon his house.

Right welcome was it to her feelings to see in her manly and gentlemanly a spirit the tidings were received. For his little girl, who deserved all the good that could befall her, and would deal honourably with any fortune she might inherit, Henry Corbet rejoiced at the miracle. — But as regarded the boys, he would prefer, he said, that neither of them ever heard of the reversion. "It would unsettle their minds for their own humble fortunes; and he trusted in God that they might never profit by William Enmore's generous goodness. Tiny must marry, and have heirs of her own."

"But if such are his notions, I trust, my dear child," observed Lucretia, on hearing how little Mr. Corbet appeared inclined to interfere in his daughter's affairs, "I shall plume myself on her accession of fortune, — and I sincerely trust Henry Corbet won't be thinking of doing

the agency? — He mustn't grow too grand for Northover. — It was poor Willy's first and last desire that you should reside on the spot."

"Not more than it is mine," replied Sophia: "My wishes are bounded by the ring-fence of Heckington. At some future time, when I grow older, and wiser, and stronger, I may feel it my duty to visit Fredville, and endeavour to carry out the intentions of him to whom I owe so much. At present, all I desire is quiet."

"Yes, — *at present*," — persisted Lucretia, who was profiting by Mrs. Enmore's evening doze to say more than, in cousin Jane's afflicted state, she permitted herself to observe while she was listening. — "But the time will come, Tiny, when you will mix more largely with the world. You must assume the place that belongs to you. I don't want to see you become a flighty gadabout, like those fashion-mongering Horsfords. But you ought to see something of good company, my dear. You ought to have a London home —"

"And so she has," — interrupted Mrs. Enmore, suddenly unclosing her eyes, — her ears having been previously open. "My house is her home. Till she marries, I trust she will have no other. In his last moments, Willy bad her be a daughter to me."

"And a daughter I will be, if you permit it!" replied her niece, stooping to imprint a dutiful kiss on her *contracted forehead*. — "Northover will remain my home. Northover, which is good enough for my father,

is good enough for *me*. You must visit us there, A Enmore; and in return, I shall be your frequent visitor here."

The intimation seemed to brighten the usually eyes of her aunt. — Mrs. Enmore did not so much advert to the declaration she had so often made, "never again would she set foot in Heckington." Her sole anxiety was to retain her niece as an inmate. The one of her sons was lost to her for ever, the other restored; and chiefly, by the interposition of his cousin Arthur might again escape her, unless attracted to her presence by the magnet which had already proved powerful.

On this point, her mind was as yet at ease. Arthur was already off to Jamaica; and Miss Corbet, depressed and weary, had returned to the shady solitudes of her home. And as the marine propensities which expanded annually, in the month of September, in the Great-Britain nature of her *Maire du Palais* and Mistress of the Revels were by no means extinguished by the influence of family-mourning, Mrs. Enmore proceeded as usual to St. Leonards; having for the first time secured the companionship of her obnoxious kinswoman. Now when family troubles were thickening around her, it was consolatory to command a ready ear into which her grievances could be poured. She was beginning to recognise in *Lucretia* the charm found by Montaigne in the com-

f Boëthius: that each was thoroughly conversant with the affairs of the other.

But while these two elderly ladies were drowsily jogging through their monotonous airings, and droning over their insipid meals, Clevelands was in a state of intense commotion. Never were people so aggrieved as the Horsfords. The world seemed really in league against them; — ungrateful world, — for which they lived and acted, — plotted, dressed and talked! —

In the first place, the graceless Bob whom, when by stress of interest, he obtained a secretaryship, for which he was about as fit as one of his father's coachhorses, they had regarded as a brand snatched from the fire, had not only made so rash a book at Goodwood as left his account with his bankers alarmingly overdrawn, and dipped deeply into the all but empty pockets of his father; but had let in his intended brother-in-law, Charles Turberville, for so large a share of his liabilities, that the Zeus of the Abbey had fulminated his bolts, and interdicted all further intercourse with Clevelands, whether as regarded its male or female representatives.

In the next, so far from securing for Florence a brilliant wedding and handsome establishment, the death of William Enmore, over which Clevelands had exulted with such ghoulish triumph, had effected nothing but to despatch Arthur Rawdon to Jamaica, without so much as a *parting interview* with his lady-love.

On the other hand, Miss Corbet had removed little

Alfred from Aldenham to Eton; and was met in the most secluded drives of the neighbourhood in a pony phaeton which seemed to have been created by a fairy's wand. The old lady in a close black bonnet who accompanied her, was said to be Arthur Rawdon's mother. But as the answer to visitors at the lodge gate (Heckington and porch of Northover was, "Mr. and Mrs. Corbet at present received no visitors," neighbourly curiosity was distanced.

Scandal, however, unluckily, was not silenced. If it be "a far cry to Loch Awe," Mrs. Horsford, evidently considering Jamaica out of earshot, indulged herself to the utmost in grumbling and accusation.

"There was no possible doubt," she said, "that Mr. Rawdon of Heckington" (never omitting the qualification from which he derived his consequence in the county), "could set aside his brother's disgraceful will, whenever he thought proper. Indeed, she had reason to suppose that he had proceeded to the West Indies chiefly to collect evidence, on the spot, of William Rawdon's infirmity of intellect. To leave to a relation on his mother's side an estate which, for more than a century had been in possession of his father's family, was an act of such manifest injustice, as to leave no doubt of his insanity. It would of course be painful to the family to have it proved in court. But it was a duty which Mr. Rawdon of Heckington owed to himself, and it was a duty he owed to his affianced wife; who, she went,

who perhaps ought not to say it of her own daughter), and, throughout the whole business, behaved like an angel."

"Throughout the whole business behaved like an angel!" echoed her obsequious chorus, — Mr. and Mrs. William Hartland. — But there were other neighbours of less abject caste, who were of opinion that, for the betrothed of a man undergoing such severe family-affliction, the fair Florence made a somewhat prominent exhibition of her angelic charms at certain county festivities, at Hatfield, Gorhambury, and Knebworth. Though she might consider herself bound to do the honours of Hertfordshire to so intimate a friend of her brother-in-law, Sir James Armstead, as the handsome and popular George Marsham, there was scarcely occasion to do them in such *very* dark corners of the conservatory, or in such secluded nooks of bookrooms, as she usually selected for the purpose.

But then, poor thing, as Mrs. Horsford judiciously remarked, she was so much in want of something to cheer her! Poor Flo. was a girl of such exquisite sensibility, that she would otherwise have become a prey to evil spirits. "That the man she loved was gone to avenge his murdered brother's death, in a spot where it was more than likely he would be murdered in his turn, was a trying ordeal for any girl."

It was not thus, however, that poor Tiny endeavoured to solace her sorrow. Hunt Balls, *fêtes* and George Marsham, were to her altogether vanity. She was living

with the dead — with the absent — with the reminiscences of her own heart.

Even, however, in the peaceful seclusion of her country-home, the serenity of poor Placidia was occasionally almost ruffled by the idle talk brought back to her father from justice meetings, "sessions and 'sins" — rumours emanating from Cleveland's, and somewhat hatched by the Horsfords; who, compelled by the eagerness with which their advances were received by the heiress, to admit that there was no hope of engraving her on the family-tree by a match with Bob or on her lanky-haired partners at Lady Armstead's wedding ball, — revenged themselves by the most malicious insinuations. Since she would not accept them as alms, Mrs. Horsford resolved to teach her their importance as antagonists.

To such people, the art of plausible misrepresentation is familiar. It was so easy to hint that, the Scoundrel Corbet who, as a cunning child, had wheedled his grandmother out of a legacy of five thousand pounds, had, as an artful girl, deluded her Creole cousin into disinheriting in her favour his only brother. According to their account, *she* was the origin of all the objection raised by Mrs. Enmore to the union of her son Arthur with "poor dear Florence;" — she was, in fact, the serpent which Cleveland's had warmed in its bosom, until it was stinging it to death. For "nothing could exceed the kindness shown her by the whole Horsford family, &c."

a this magnificent heiress was only a poor little needed girl in a pinafore, pummeling the Latin grammar her little brothers. Even *then* they *ought* to have d her out. For she had played a most mischievous between them and their dear Amy; creating dis- ions with the view of establishing a *pied-à-terre* in : Lane and at Higham Grange. At the latter place, over, she had provoked the disgust of the whole hbourhood by her bold set at young Turberville; , luckily, was rescued by his parents from her clutch, ime to enable him to fix his affections in a more ble quarter." —

Other slanders, still coarser in their audacity, were ouse silenced in presence of Mr. Corbet; being of a re to which a father responds by a clenched fist or air trigger. But they were not the less circulated.

mouth of Mrs. Horsford combined the peculiarities ibed to the princess in a certain fairy tale; — if at s it dropped pearls and diamonds, it was quite as ble of producing toads and scorpions.

Though far from insubordinate to the forms and ions of society, Miss Corbet took less heed than ht have been expected of the misinterpretation placed a her conduct. The conflict in her mind absorbed its faculties. Her heart was too busy with the and the future, to allow leisure for present resentments. And "*much coin*" was bringing with it, as usual, h care." Her father was busy with the recent ad-

dition to his stables and stock; Alfred with his school classics, and Edgar with the nursery-gown much harder to please than sister Tiny. But whose open hand they were indebted for these tions, was labouring more severely than them the disentanglement, namely, of those mysterious heart more hard to interpret than the most abstruse of science.

But amidst the struggles of her mind, a transition of character was as imperceptibly effecting, in the confusion of chaos, the round world it silently gathered into form.

The young girl, still so young, felt that she henceforward become an active agent in the busy life. Duties had devolved upon her, which demanded the utmost exercise of her principles and judgment. Happiness once so nearly within her reach, which had escaped her, might, she fancied, have been secured had she exhibited more decision — more prudence — In this transitory life, to trust to the chances of accidents, when the exercise of moral will is in order, is to tempt providence.

That Arthur had no thoughts of an immediate return to England was plainly implied in the confidence of Harman the agent, with Bedford Square. It appeared likely that he might even spend the winter in Jamaica. She must therefore lose no time in writing herself by letter.

CHAPTER II.

As a boy, Arthur Rawdon had detested the West. The uneasy home created at Fredville by his father's imperious temper and his mother's repinings at Heckington, had rendered every thing distasteful. Scenes of violence between themselves, and of persecution exercised in the Plantation, were not likely to reconcile him to the loss of old Mrs. Rawdon's idolising fondness and the pastimes of English country-life.

But these contrarieties had served at the time to draw into closer fraternal love the hearts of the two little boys who had never yet heard the fatal words selfishness, — preference, — eldest son, — property, — income — as applied to their own prospects. That the forbidden fruit which brought sin and sorrow into the world was a *Golden* apple, who can say; or that a state of Innocence implies one in which "scales of the tested gold" were never heard of! —

The sordid tenets of worldly wisdom had, however, prevailed for a time; and now that the grown man was thrown back into the haunts of his boyhood, how readily did his mind recur to those confiding days of early love; those days when he and Willy were united against a common foe; their chief care to

avoid and distance their parents and tutor; their only pleasure, to love and serve each other.

What would Arthur now have given, as he wandered through the neglected rooms and echoing verandahs of Fredville, to recal, for a single day, — a single hour, — that happy brotherly intercourse; — unembittered by an act for atonement, — or self-accusation? How completely had they been wrapt up in each other! — How thoroughly had their boyish feats and mischief been enjoyed in common!

The scenes around him, so little thought of during the intervening years, brought back to him in consequence in more vivid entirety, the ties with which they were connected. Sunshine and shade, — the scent of the tropical flowers, — the flavour of the tropical fruits, — the peculiarities of tropical vegetation, — seemed suddenly to transport him into the past. Some beautiful bird or curious insect served to recal the stolen holidays when Willy and he escaped from home, and were brought back, captured by a favourite old negro named Ramee, who officiated as Provost Marshal to their father.

No wonder, therefore, that, when daylight with its glories and excitements was withdrawn, the evenings of the solitary exile weighed him down to the dust — The trial instituted by government against his brother's murderers, was fortunately ended before he reached Jamaica; and two of the accused negroes, convicted of "*administering* noxious drugs to the late proprietor of the

He, with intent to do him grievous bodily harm, but not with intent to kill or slay," were already undergoing their sentence of ten years' penal servitude. There was consequently no field for further action. He remained only to muse and to suffer, a self-installed inmate at Fredville under the authority of his brother's executor; obsequiously waited upon by the identical old valet who had tyrannised over his boyhood.

But he seemed riveted to the spot. So apt are we to linger lovingly, in after-life, amid scenes disdained in youth as tame or tedious; so apt to select for enjoyment the very viands we loathed as children, — the books or pictures or prints, from which we turned satiated away.

It might be, however, that Arthur Rawdon, while wandering among the feathery shadows of the bamboos, watching the darting of the humming-birds among growing masses of Bignonia in the neglected gardens of Fredville, had other thoughts than the reconstruction of the dislocated fabric of his life. In addition to the remedies which seem to restore poor Willy to him in life and light, — not as he had made him, — not as the German student, addicted to beer and tobacco, into which domestic jealousy and pitiful envy had degraded his noble nature, — not as the "young sugar-broker," over whom Job Horsford had taught him to exult, — but as the warmhearted kindly being — a better, dearer, nobler *creation of himself*, — so ready to love him that he even

renounced the hand of their dear Tiny for his sake, - in addition to all these reflections, a growing dread the ties in which he had entangled himself, or suffer himself to be entangled, hung heavily on his mind.

Delay as he might among scenes so replete with interest both painful and pleasing, and where numerous connections and friends of his late father beset him with hospitality that afforded decent pretext for prolonging his sojourn at Fredville, he must, in the sequel, return to England and the Horsfords. — With them, since the nature of his brother's will transpired, he had held personal intercourse. — But their previous indelicate and mercenary conduct, left him little doubt of what he should have to undergo when they met again; — he unscrupulously his future mother-in-law would press his acceptance of his cousin's generous offers, and he insolently she would revile him on finding him resolve to decline.

What people to live amongst, for the remainder of his days! — What ignoble natures to rely upon for support and comfort! — How dreadful to know that the woman who, for time and eternity, was to constitute the portion of his existence, — his mortal and inner companion, — was a mere actress; — playing on the stage of life a part acquired by rote, and subside behind the scenes, into discontented and slovenly ennui! —

How should he bear it! — Might he not yet

ie, like his father before him, a coarse domestic
; avenging on this uncompanionable puppet, his
re and his disappointment? Might he not, harassed
norose, lapse into a harsh father, — a savage
r, — a bad member of the community? — Was
s vocation as man and citizen, marred for ever? —
gain, how thoroughly must his highminded cousin
e him. With so few advantages of education as
ad enjoyed, the daughter of a man so dull and
d in capacity as Henry Corbet, how generous were
mpulses, how right-minded *her* decisions! — How
had she shown herself his superior in all the re-
s of life! —

Tell did he recollect the sarcastic smile with which
ad listened, the preceding winter, at Turberville
y, to Sir James Armstead's encomiums of the Sophia
t, with whom he was himself at that time so little
inted; and how he and Florence had laughed to-
r at the solemn Romeo, Mr. Frere, when sympa-
l with by the Armsteads as driven to despair by
ndifference of the absent Tiny.

"I don't wonder he is out of spirits," was Sir James's
ent on the melancholy countenance of the mild off-

"It is not often a man obtains even the chance of
a wife; — good and true as a man of the highest
ples and nicest honour, yet endowed with the
est fascinations of her sex."

had laughed then at Sir James's enthusiasm, be-

cause the Horsfords laughed. He did not laugh now. — He repented only that such was the girl he might have converted into Mrs. Rawdon of Heckington; such the cousin Tiny who, but for him, would have become the dearest of sisters; such the pure and highminded woman whom he could scarcely expect would stoop to become the friend and companion of his future wife!

Dark indeed was his horizon. But by degrees, as the case with all solitary dreamers, the mists began clear away. A ragged rent in the clouds served to admit passage for a ray of light.

Why should he submit to all this? — Why sacrifice himself? — Why fling away his life — the most glorious endowment we receive at the hands of our Creator?

That the heart of Florence was deeply engaged in his favour, he had reason to disbelieve. He had been formerly inclined to snub the clear-sighted brother who presumed to insinuate that her affections were pledged to Heckington, not to the Arthur Rawdon attached to the premises. But he had since witnessed, at High Grange, her foolish flirtation with George Marchmont which, on the part of the latter, purported only to mark his indifference to Miss Corbet's departure. And though Mrs. Horsford had endeavoured to palliate her daughter's flighty conduct by assurances that it arose from her desire to revive by a little timely jealousy his apparently declining affection, he could not blind himself to

act that Marsham's handsome face and Marsham's brilliant reputation, had their share in her folly.

He now deeply regretted that he had not, at the moment, resented with manly firmness the levity of her conduct. But he was at that period under the control of her brother, and at enmity with his own. Above all, he had not learned to appreciate by contrast with his calm steady-like cousin, the flashy insincerity of the Horsfords. Ashamed of being slighted in so large and public a circle, he had contented himself with exacting that there should be an end to her intimacy with the fashionable pamphleteer. But the remembrance of her flippant resentment recurring to his memory, now, among the plantain-trees and humming-birds, convinced him that, should he indeed find courage to break his engagement, his broken heart would render the fracture compound. On that point, his conscience was at ease.

"After all," he argued, as the fickle heart of man is apt to argue, in such emergencies, "should I not inflict a far more cruel injury on this girl by making her my wife, now that I have ceased to love her, — now that all the illusions with which my boyish fancy invested her, have vanished for ever, — now that I see her and hers in their true light, as fair-faced impostors, revolting as that fairy Melusina I used to read of, with the face of a woman ending in the coil of a serpent, — than by placing the truth honestly before her; and leaving her to marry George Marsham, or any other man to whom

the liberal dowry with which I would supply her, might be an object?"

Often had Mrs. Horsford suggested to him, with spurring him on to the fulfilment of his matrimonial engagement, that, at a sufficient rate of interest, it would be easy to raise a considerable sum by mortgage on Heckington property. He would now adopt her advice not to enable himself to fulfil, but to annul his engagement. Money would do it. He felt convinced that money would set him free! —

In this resolution, he was strengthened by the conviction that it would enable him to realise one of the last wishes of his brother. To Willy, the whole Horsford family were objects of detestation or contempt; there was no sacrifice he would not cheerfully be made to release his brother from their toils.

At no great distance from Fredville, in the recesses of a gloomy grove, divided from the cane-field by one of those finely-wooded, rifted coves, which constitute the most beautiful portion of the Island landscape stood the venerable mausoleum of the Enmore family consecrated spot, such as, in the earlier days of the colonisation of Jamaica, was regarded as indispensable to the dignity of a wealthy proprietor.

There, the late Reginald Enmore had intended to lie, by the side of his parents and their progenitors. But it was at Heckington his remains were fated to rest while his son, to whom that English village-church

ave been so much more congenial, was fated to entombment within the lonely monument sheltered by the luxuriant vegetation of the tropics.

Ancient cotton-trees, coeval with the building, extended over it, as if in benediction, their spectral white boughs, now leafless and ghastly; while here and there, at a distance, rich groups of the mango-tree, with which the great Rodney, half a century before, enriched the district, threw into relief, by their dark foliage, the dim grey stones of the sepulchre.

Thither, in the still evenings which the bloom of the logwood rendered fragrant, did Arthur direct his solitary footsteps; and, amid the hush of nature, broken only by the occasional notes of the mocking-bird — the nightingale of the tropics, — stand transfixed before the iron gate surmounted by sculptures symbolic of its mournful destination: appealing, in the depths of his soul, to the memory of the dead, to confirm and sanctify the step he was meditating.

There lay the brother who had so loved him, and whom he had so outraged. There lay one whose most earnest desire had been to rescue him from irretrievable union with the low-minded and unworthy. Though impetuous, the moral nature of Arthur Rawdon was feeble and vacillating; and it needed this strengthening of his purpose by connecting it with a spot and antecedents so sacred, to reconcile him to the scandal certain to ensue from such a rupture as he contemplated; to the vulgar

abuse of Bob Horsford, and the supercilious were his mother and sisters.

As if such paltry retribution were to be v against the evils of a connection certain to confirm frailty of his nature, — every failing of his ch depress his aims in life, — degrade the tone mind, — and render him, like the frivolous at Cleveland, vain, hollow, groveling, and co- ible! —

Mr. Harman, a worthy, undemonstrative m climatized into the languor of Creole habits, thou Willy Enmore had somewhat alarmed him by his tric starts of emotion, was utterly at a loss to for the fluctuations of temper and temperament i hibited by his brother.

The agent was a widower, with two spinster da — Mary and Martha, — or, as they Lindley-Mun called themselves on their visiting-cards, “the Harman,” — apathetic, narrow-minded women, w to a chip by climate and seclusion; who, never been thirty miles from Fredville, regarded the tw Enmores as Princes of the Blood. Willy, on hi sion to the property, had become at once their P. Wales. But though Arthur, by exclusion from t cession, had forfeited a considerable portion of l sequence, they were deeply concerned at notie declining health. Just such variability of hum complexion as he was beginning to exhibit, bei

the commencement of Willy's indisposition. Those two young men, the handsomest and most distinguished-looking who had ever met their inexperienced eyes, seemed predestined to perish from the moment they set foot on the land of their forefathers!

So perseveringly, indeed, did the sympathising damsels point out the change to their father, that the poor agent began to grow anxious lest there should have been some renewal of the flagitious dealings by which his brother had been destroyed. The death of a second victim might perhaps implicate even himself in suspicion; the convicted negroes having stated, in court, that their object in endeavouring to hasten young Enmore's departure from Fredville, was to secure the renewal of the unmolested rule of "Massa Harman."

But independent of these selfish terrors, he was sincerely interested in the destiny of the two fine young men whom, as boys, he had often begged off from their father's unmeasured coercions. On young Rawdon's first arrival, he had endeavoured to persuade him to take up his abode at the agency-house, (known on the Plantation by the name of "St. Marks,") rather than in the deserted mansion at Fredville, so fraught with melancholy associations; little surmising that those very associations constituted the charm of the place in the eyes of the last of the Enmores.

But now, he did more than entreat, — he almost insisted; and at length, finding all other arguments in-

effectual, hinted his belief that the malefactors who conspired against the health of his brother, were doing with his own.

But Arthur was neither to be intimidated nor persuaded.

"For what purpose," he said, "could the man suspected of this new crime desire to drive *him* from the island? — *He* had no power over them — no desire to interfere in the legislation of Fredville. As Mr. I was well aware, he had never so much as expressed an opinion concerning the local reforms and institutions established by his late brother."

The utmost he could be persuaded to do to soothe the solitudes of the prim tender sisters, was occasionally to join the family dinner-table at St. Mark's; while by their more practical father his despondency attributed to vexation at witnessing the prosperity of the fine estate so strangely alienated from its rightful owner, there was some excuse for the sentimental speculations and endeavours to convert him into a Byronic hero.

One day, however, he made his appearance at St. Mark's with a countenance so much brightened and deportment so *almost* cheerful, that Mary and Anne exchanged looks of mutual gratulation. The mysterious sorrows of the Manfred, Lara, or Childe Harold of Heckington were evidently in process of mitigation. Before the evening was over, he would perhaps sufficiently over-

external distresses, to mix in the society of the district, and become like other people.

The truth was, that he had that morning disburthened his mind by completing, for the morrow's mail, the two letters to Florence and her father which were to announce the rupture of his engagement. A bond for ten thousand pounds, payable on the death of his mother, and to be kept both then and for ever an inviolable secret among the parties, purported to afford such compensation as, under similar circumstances, is adjudged by the law. But if this offer or his change of inclinations were resented by the family, he offered to the brothers of the injured lady the personal satisfaction they were entitled to claim.

Except the simple fact of renouncing his engagement, the letter contained no offence. He wrote as temperately as firmly; admitting himself to blame; but refusing to redeem the fault by a still deeper wrong.

Such was the origin of the renovated spirits that restored light and life to the looks of Arthur Rawdon. — As he joined, almost for the first time, in cheerful conversation with his hosts, Mary and Martha, who had always admitted his features and figure to be finer than those of their favourite Willy Enmore, began to think him nearly as agreeable. If less interested in the schools and infirmaries of the Fredville estate, over which they had for so many years judiciously presided, it was not to be expected that he should care so much for the

well-being of the property of which he had b spoiled.

They succeeded, however, before dinner w in obtaining from him a promise that he would v his way to the Hurtsfield Plantation with their the following day, the St. Mark's Alms-houses fo negroes, originally endowed by his family.

"You will thus be enabled," observed the the "Misses," "to communicate to Miss Corbet, return to England, the exact state of the premises are in want of far more substantial reparation th chooses to undertake on his own authority. At ment of Mr. William Enmore's ever-to-be deplored he was engaged in overlooking plans and estim the repair and extension of St. Mark's."

"In that case, Mr. Harman must communic my cousin on the subject," Arthur said. "I st abstain from interfering in the affairs of the est: many mails may pass before I leave Jamaica."

Welcome news to the damsels, of whose v mance he was the hero! — It was some co know that the return of spring might find him Fredville.

Scarcely, however, had they expressed the faction at hearing he had determined to pro sojourn among them, when a huge packet o was brought in: — the London mail, forwarded v usual local letters, by Mr. Harman's daily postm

"Perhaps," exclaimed Mr. Rawdon, with heightened ear and eager eyes, indignant at the composure with which the agent went on sugaring his pine apple, instead of hastening to open the despatch, — "perhaps there may be among your letters one or two for self?"

"Only business letters," rejoined James Harman, seeing at the well-known superscriptions which satisfied him that they might wait for investigation till the close of dessert. Whereupon the negro in attendance officially informed his master's guest that the postman, aware he was dining at St. Mark's, had carried several letters for "Massa Rawdon" on to Fredville.

After this announcement, the claret before him might have been nectar, and failed to detain him. Starting up ceremoniously from table, he prepared, almost without delay, for immediate departure. To Mr. Harman's entreaties that he would allow a messenger to be despatched for the letters, or at least that he would wait for his name to be put to, he scarcely even replied.

Letters such as *he* expected, must be perused where curious eye was fixed upon him. Letters such as he *had* to receive, must be enjoyed under the sacred roof of home! —

CHAPTER III.

His anticipations were realised; or rather ~~satisfactions~~ exceeded. For though one of the large enclosures lying on his table at Fredville was addressed in the ~~hand~~ writing of his cousin, not a line awaited him ~~from~~ of the Horsfords.

They had perhaps taken offence at his ~~prompt~~ departure and obstinate silence. — And oh! ~~that~~ the night! —

The remaining two letters were from his mother and solicitor; and there was consequently no drawback on the eagerness with which he fastened upon Miss Corbett's packet. But as an epicure delays over his feast, he prepared himself for the enjoyment of its perusal by throwing a log on the fire, — drawing down the shade of his reading-lamp, — and establishing himself luxuriously in his arm-chair. In former years, he used to tear open with impetuous hands the letters of Florence Horsford and read them where he stood, trembling, and devouring them with his eyes. But a letter from Placidia was to be otherwise dealt with; a letter of sweet confidence and friendship, supplying balm for the ills of life, ~~and~~ for their endurance.

The contents of the present communication were, however, of a wholly unexpected nature.

"I write, dear Arthur," it began, "to entreat your immediate return to England. It is indispensable to your honour and future happiness, that you should be here——"

Already, Arthur was beginning to be thankful that no impediment need detain him a day longer at Fredville! — Already, the letter trembled in his hands! —

"You will admit that your marriage with poor Florence must not be further delayed, when I tell you that he has no longer a home. Cleveland's has been in the hands of bailiffs; and Mr. Horsford has only been rescued from prison by the interposition of his son-in-law, Sir James Armstead. — The poorest roof you could offer to your affianced wife, would be welcome under such circumstances. But you are able to do much for her, and for them all. The deed made out by poor Willy, securing you the moiety of the proceeds of his West India property, has been fully executed by his successor; and though your susceptible pride may induce you to reject the donation, you cannot compel me to resume it. The money would only accumulate in the hands of the Harbans. Your cousin Tiny will never touch a shilling of what is now your own.

"That each of us, however, may concede some sacrifice, — (and I am afraid there is something of Rawdon

arrogance in the nature of both,) — you shall, on attaining your rightful inheritance at Heckington, when your own income will suffice you, — cancel the settlement I have made. Till then, who knows better than yourself how very far the remaining half ~~can~~ ^{will} suffice your desires or requirements? It is our intention to remain at Northover till Heckington shall fall into your hands; and most acceptable will it be both to my father and myself to have you and your wife here, as our guests."

Arthur Rawdon drew a deep and shuddering breath. He had scarcely courage to read on.

"The sad particulars of the poor Hornsford's ~~adverse~~ ^{mis}fortunes, I need scarcely relate," continued Miss Corbett, "as you will soon learn all from themselves. For some time, a crash in their establishment has been ~~spreading~~ ^{known} by those who busy themselves in the affairs of their neighbours. But it seems that the crisis was accelerated by the imprudence of the old gentleman in accepting bills, to enable his eldest son to discharge certain play or turf debts; but for the settlement of which, he must have forfeited his place under government and his credit in the world. — I mention this, Arthur, because unkind rumours are afloat, that you, the companion of his follies, started for the West Indies so hastily, only to escape being involved in the catastrophe; and it is this which makes me so urgent for your immediate return. Indeed, indeed, you must lose no time in coming ~~back~~ ^{home}."

“My father who, as you know, is far from partial to a Clevelands family, declares that Robert Horsford is ly made the scapegoat for his mother’s follies; and that a ruin of the family has been brought on by a long ies of extravagance; — London vanities, and prodigal spitality. — Sir James Armstead, besides paying down a large sum for which the execution was put in, has t only afforded an asylum to them all, but prevailed his neighbour Mr. Turberville to abridge the term of son’s probation, and consent to his immediate union th Caroline. The Turbervilles, indeed, have behaved bly. But they will reap their reward. Their son has asented to be bound down against any return to the rf or gaming-table; and the injurious influence of his other-in-law will be frustrated, as the young couple e to reside wholly at Turberville Abbey. — Dear Amy, midst the anxieties she has had to undergo, looks rward to this as a happy addition to her country pleasures; and if anything were wanting to perfect her attachment to her excellent husband, it has certainly been pplied by the prompt and liberal aid he has afforded her family.

“You, my dear Arthur, must not be less kind, or se generous. My aunt Enmore, I grieve to say, contemplates the event in a very different spirit; and fancies at the impending ruin of the Horsford family, long reseen by both mother and daughters, was the origin their *matrimonial* engagements. She even fancies that

her son is relieved from *his* by the disgrace which has befallen Clevelands! —

“But her son will think otherwise. — Her son well knows how fondly he was captivated by the beauty of Florence Horsford, and how sincere and earnest was his courtship. That he could desert her because her father had been arrested for debt, is not in his nature.

“For my own part, I own I foresee advantages to arise for my dear cousin from the downfall of the family. There must now be an end of Mrs. Horsford’s foolish vanities and ostentations. The three sisters, happily settled, will subside contentedly into domestic life; and could you see dear Amy, with her two pretty little girls, already beginning to forget the existence of a world beyond the walls of Higham Grange or her house in Park Lane, you would admit that, in the atmosphere of a quiet home, the gauzy pinions adapted to that of Clevelands fall off as spontaneously as leaves in autumn. Florence Rawdon, like her elder sister, will become one of the best of wives.”

That the Arthur who was to operate so miraculous a transformation, was of a very different opinion, was little to the purpose. His doom was sealed. Not for a moment did he dream of gainsaying the decree of his cousin. *Her* view of the case could only be just and equitable. Since it became him, as a man of honour, to fulfil his disastrous engagement, it must be fulfilled! —

Before he proceeded to the perusal of his other letters, he opened the desk on his writing-table, to deposit there the ill-omened missive which had conveyed his unexpected condemnation. The first objects that struck him were the two letters he had so superfluously prepared for the morrow's mail — now, alas! useless and unavailable. But as he flung them petulantly into the fire, and watched them, flame by flame, spark by spark, consuming away, he could not but congratulate himself on the habits of tardiness which had delayed his sending them to the post. — Since his marriage was to be, better far that his reluctance should remain a secret to Florence and her family. The knowledge of his aversion would scarcely increase his chances of domestic happiness.

But when the deed was done, and he had come to the thorough conviction that he must hasten to England, and as precipitately complete his own immolation as he had done that of his letters, how difficult he found it to confine his attention to the prolix details of his mother's diffuse communication; her abuse of the artful Horsfords, and satisfaction that their discreditable break-up afforded just grounds for the rupture of his engagement. He must now hasten back to England, she said, and consolidate the fortunes of his family by a happy marriage with his cousin; describing Northover, where she had passed a portion of the autumn, as a paradise on earth, and Tiny *as an angel!*

The formal epistle of his solicitor intimated only that a deed had been deposited with him by Messrs. Harcus and Wrottesley, who undertook to pay into his hands, half-yearly, an annuity of fifteen hundred per annum to the credit of Arthur Rawdon, Esq. of Heckington; with instructions that if, within three years, the money in question were not appropriated by the said Arthur Rawdon, the accumulations were to be made over to some public charity.

A short letter from his friend Charles Tutstall completed the despatch; — a short flighty letter, written in the highest spirits. The break-up of Cleveland seemed to affect him only with joy, as the means of accelerating his marriage. He excused himself for dwelling slightly on the particulars, — since, as Arthur was of course to return instantly to England, it was not worth while to write more fully on their family affairs.

"We shall be the friendliest as well as happiest brothers-in-law in the world!" wrote the exulting Charles; "and Armstead, who, on the recent occasion, has shown himself an excellent fellow, will do all the heavy work for us with the old folks. You will learn, by the way, from the papers, that he is about to be elevated to the peerage as Lord Higham of Higham; and there is a wonderful flourish of ministerial penny-trumpets, proclaiming how thoroughly this active and meritorious public servant deserves the honour conferred upon him by his sovereign. — Our country neighbours, the

not quite comfortable at the innovation of a coronet on the old hall-chairs at Higham Grange, pretend that Armstead owes his advancement to the backstairs influence of his brother-in-law; — little surmising that Lord Brookdale has not sufficient interest to place a turnspit in the royal kitchen.

“The truth is, that there has been one of those little Cabinet-quakes which often precede the meeting of Parliament; and Armstead was wanted to play the plausible in the Upper House, as representative of a Department standing much in need of a permanent apologist.

“Old Frere has stepped into the official shoes of the new Peer, as well as into the Privy Council; and these two steady-going, well-broken old colleagues, are by no means likely to upset the coach. Report asserts that your pretty cousin has at length made up her mind to accept the new Right Honourable. A capital wife for a public man — calm, dignified, wealthy, and — as cold as a stone!

“What a happy family-party next winter in Somersetshire, Arthur; — you and I and our wives, — the Highams and Freres! I mean to make the walls of the old Abbey sing for joy.”

Arthur Rawdon's mind, which had been previously made up, as a door is inextricably closed by the vibration of an earthquake, became again shaken by this reckless epistle.

In the anticipation of such a family circle, he could

not exult. What! his Tiny, — his Placidia, — his warm-hearted, noble-minded cousin, — yoked for life with an official automaton, a soulless Red-Tapist, — a withered mummy, without sympathies or affections! — He would not believe it! — He could not resign himself to such a sacrifice; a sacrifice, for which there was no excuse or pretext.

"Sophia Corbet was not, like the Hornfords, homeless or penniless. And was she not happier and more independent at Northover, in the enjoyment of a personal competence, than as the wife of a public drudge? — Yes, though styled Right Honourable, a public drudge! — neither his time nor his opinions his own, — harnessed to the car of an administration — if car that deserved to be called, which was a mere hackney omnibus, — a vehicle let out for hire!"

At the mere notion of such degradation of a noble soul, his Creole blood boiled in his veins as he impetuously paced the room. Not even Lady Armistead, in the fretful outset of her married life, had conceived so disparaging an idea of a Downing-Street-official, as, at that moment, the harassed cousin of Placidia!

Then came the malignant whisper of the ~~black~~ fiend, Mistrust, to which the heart of man is so apt to lend an ear. Tiny, like the rest of her sex, was perhaps ambitious. Weary of the humble seclusion of Northover, she wished to shine in the world; and the position of the Right Honourable Barton Frere — ~~that~~ ~~the~~

of his ministerial *clique*, to become Sir Barton Frere, K.C.B., and dignify his wife into a ladyship, — would afford her a far from despicable pedestal. But was it for this she had been enriched by that devoted Willy, who had lavished on her his heart, soul, and fortune? —

It suddenly occurred to him, through the shortsightedness engendered by passion (for in a calmer mood he would have remembered that Miss Corbet had been first courted by the Red-Tapist, when endowed with a mere pittance), that, were the Privy Councillor aware that instead of the four or five thousand a-year assigned to his cousin by common report, she commanded, during his mother's lifetime, scarcely a quarter of the income, he might be less eager in pursuit of her hand; and by an evil impulse, as by his father's spirit revived within him, he placed himself at his desk, and penned his answer to his cousin; — thanked her for her counsels, — gratefully accepted her proffered liberality, and informed her that, in the course of a few weeks, he should be in England for the ratification of his matrimonial engagements. "He and his wife would spend Midsummer with her at Northover." — And oh! what a burst of hollow laughter echoed through that vast and dreary library, as he traced the words — "*my wife!*"

To young Turberville, he wrote a short letter, under the influence of the same unnatural excitement. "The generosity of his cousin enabled him," he said, "to redeem his pledges to Florence Horsford, at a moment

when it was indeed incumbent on him to afford her protection. And though this arrangement would reduce the income of Miss Corbet to comparative indigence, she was far too high-minded to regret a sacrifice essential to the honour of her family."

To Mrs. Enmore, on the contrary, he vouchsafed only a few dry and almost haughty lines; informing her, without deigning to notice her advice, or her projects, that, in the course of a couple of months, the daughter of the ruined Horsfords was to be his wife: — words easily written; — more especially, while the demon of jealousy, warring within him, was still active and unappeased.

It was when he had to announce his intentions to Florence herself, that his task became difficult. It was so long since he had addressed her in terms of genuine affection, that there was no need to stoop to the hypocrisy of pretended ardour. But even when endeavouring to envelope the offer of his hand in terms sufficiently tender to avoid the appearance of insult, he felt as if committing a forgery.

Even with this compunction rankling in his mind, he was careful not to close his letter to his future wife without reminding her that their wedded happiness was to be purchased at the expense of his country; and that by her concessions in their favour, Miss Corbet had ceased to be rich.

Through the Armisteads, this night

ears of the Downing Street mummy. — *That* marriage, — *that* evil result of the family disorganisation — might, still perhaps be frustrated.

It afforded no small comfort to the harassed man when morning broke upon that night of complex irritation, that an engagement he had made the previous day with Harman to visit the Coffee Plantation of Hurtsfield, forming part of the Enmore property, for which Harman of Spanish Town officiated as the attorney, afforded a pretext for prolonging his stay in Jamaica till the following mail, as well as for quitting Fredville.

Hurtsfield was situated at forty miles' distance, between the hills and the shore, in one of the most picturesque districts of the island; and having despatched his letters, change of scene and air afforded a welcome relief. — The prim methodical agent, as he took his place beside him in the old sociable, in which he had so often accompanied his turbulent father, but who, remembering Arthur at Fredville in his days of petticoats and spelling-books, was too apt still to regard him as a grown-up child, little surmised the storm of passion brewing in the mind of his companion.

The four old mules, long accustomed to the road, did not maintain their even pace with steadier regularity than Harman continued to prose on and on, concerning the comparative returns of the Fredville and Hurtsfield Plantations. *That he received no reply, did not surprise him. Mr. Rawdon was probably engaged in mental*

computation arising out of his elaborate statistics. But if he vouchsafed no tribute of applause to the admirable plans which poor Harman was taking such pains to expound, he was equally regardless of the beautiful scenery they were traversing; — clefts in the hills, already verdant with the rich foliage of the wild fig and wild plantain; affording a rich contrast to the extensive plains round Fredville, as yet imperfectly clothed with the tender green of the kittereen, diversified here and there by scattered groups of feathery bamboo. All was lost upon him. He seemed to gaze on vacancy. That "inward eye which is the bliss of solitude" was absorbed by a homely scene far, far, away. — Northover, nestling amidst its lofty elms; — Northover, where he had spent the last peaceful hours he was perhaps ever to enjoy in this world! —

From their five hours' drive, and his own drowsy monologue, poor Harman derived the conviction that he had made a stronger impression on the mind of the returned Arthur, than he had ever been able to make on the more energetic nature of his brother; and that Mr. Rawson was likely to convey to his English ward a vast opinion of his zeal and administrative wisdom.

But that the man of business was as deeply engrossed by his petty self-complacency, as Arthur by the *stifled* passion, he might have been amused at the *wild enthusiasm* of the Hurtfield niggers, in *whispering*

whom they remembered, or pretended to remember, as "little massa."

In the most slavish of their slave-days, never had they bid *more* slavishly for a holiday and gratuities, by choral songs and frantic dances in honour of "massa;" pointing out among their "piccaninies" certain little ebony Cupids distinguished by the names of "Atty," "Willy," and "Enmore," to mark them as retainers of the "grand old family." — Though well aware that both Hurtsfield and Fredville were now the property of an English "Misse," their notions of proprietorship did not extend further than a belief that, since she was not sister-born to Massa Willy or Massa Atty, she must be the affianced wife of the survivor. In this hope, they endeavoured to propitiate him by lavish offerings of early flowers, or preserved fruits served on plantain leaves; — accompanied by the barefaced flatteries where-with uncivilised human nature emulates the more polished fawning of courtier life.

To the pre-occupied ear of poor Arthur, however, their prayers and petitions were as importunate and meaningless as the noise of their banjoes and tomtoms; and right thankful was he when Mr. Harman, provoked by demonstrations of attachment which might end in Mr. Rawdon's becoming more initiated than was desirable in the administration of the property, took upon himself the task of *distributing largesse, half-holidays, and speechifications, in the name of the "grand old family;"* how

little surmising that all which its hereditary representative saw or wished to see in the Hurtsfield Plantation was the respite from coming cares afforded by the visit — Arthur's only object was to get rid of both Harrow and his sable satellites, and be alone.

Just as, at Fredville, he had comforted himself by resorting, evening after evening, to the silent grove which sheltered the last resting-place of his brother, did he now wander forth into the tranquil twilight, to escape from the administrative theories of the pains-taking Harrow. Unhinged as he was, the beauty of the scenery and fragrance of the atmosphere seemed only to aggravate his distress. How would Tiny have delighted in the lovely spot! Though to *him* the light shadows of the tamarind trees quivering on the path, and the gay humming-birds rifling the nectar of the logwood blossom were objects familiar from childhood, to *her* they would have possessed the charm of novelty. The conch-shell sounding shrilly from the woods, to summon the negroes to their labour or dismiss them to their rest, or the soft notes of the mocking-bird, would alike have charmed her ear. Had the family project been carried out, had she indeed become his wife, there, supported by his arm, that gentle cousin would have wandered with his loving and beloved; doubly united by the sacred purpose of hallowing the memory of the untimely dead, and perpetuating his beneficent projects.

Under such auspices, what noble aspirations were

have elevated their minds and purified their hearts! What mattered Heckington and its moss-grown endowments, so long as they could extend the benefits of civilisation to the heathen and the savage! — To fall back from such a mission, and such companionship, to the frivolity of Clevelands and humbug of Mrs. Horsford, was indeed a reverse! —

Absorbed by these bitter contemplations, the period allotted for his sojourn at Hurtsfield, and farewell visit to Fredville, sped like a dream. Those days of reverie once ended, with them departed his privilege of independence. The realities, — the painful realities of life, must begin; — friendly interviews with Sir Barton and Lady Frere, — affectionate greetings with the ruined family of his betrothed.

“It is my private opinion,” observed Mr. Harman to his daughters, on returning to St. Mark’s, (after assisting young Rawdon through the worries of embarkation in the fast-sailing mail-steamer, the Pearl of the Ocean,) “that young Rawdon is so cut up, both in body and mind, by the terrible fate of his brother, that he would sooner have taken his place in the family mausoleum, than in the West Indian Mail! — I trust we may not hear bad news of him, my dears. — I am to receive answers, by return of packet, from Miss Corbet, to some important business-letters he has carried over; — and it would not at all surprise me to find them sealed with *black!* —”

CHAPTER IV.

UNACQUAINTED with the antecedents of "E Heckington," the cabin passengers in the *Pe Ocean* were a little disappointed that, after th a week had reconciled them morally and phy shipboard and its disasters, and disposed them ciable, he alone still kept aloof. Looking for eager interest to the termination of their v some because England was new to them, — cause it was dear, — *he* alone appeared ind the perversities of wind and tide that were retard their arrival.

His coldness and self-absorption would per ended in provoking resentment, but that it w with regret how, though exempt from the all l able ailment of sea-farers, he became daily m and more sallow, as if under the influence disease. As he refrained from complaint, how ceased to harass him by inquiries after his h settled it among themselves that he was fretting loss of the brother for whom he still wore mow whose miserable end had produced considerable in the land they had left behind.

One or two among them, to whom the gossip of Spanish Town was familiar, ventured to whisper that the alienation of the valuable estates of Fredville and Hurtsfield was perhaps preying on his mind. But the amendment was negatived. Rawdon of Heckington could afford to be afflicted for the fate of his only brother, without reference to pecuniary loss. His faculties were in truth too painfully absorbed to interest themselves in those trivial incidents of sea-life, so eventful to the voyager. What cared *he* for flying-fish, or albatrosses, or shoals of dolphins! — The nearer he approached his native shore, the more intense became the struggle of his feelings. — Where was he to find courage for the scene he had to act, — for the ordeal he had to endure, — for the dissembling into which he had suffered himself to be induced: — for his mother's reviling, — Mrs. Horsford's adulation, — or the calm investigating eye of Sophia Corbet? —

Done and suffered, however, it all must be. Ill as he felt and looked, his strength must nerve itself for the crisis, lest the extent of the sacrifice he was making should become dangerously apparent. With despair in his heart, he must arrive, if possible, with a countenance arrayed in smiles.

It suddenly occurred to him — but not till the Pearl of the Ocean had sighted the Needles, and all was hurry and happiness on board, — that his task would be less *irksome if, instead of exposing himself in the first in-*

stance to scenes of altercation with Mrs. Enmore, or remonstrance with the future Lady Frere, he proceeded at once, as Charles Turberville had suggested, from Southampton to Higham Grange. In taking the train by surprise, he should perhaps escape a scene or two of Horsford dissimulation. At all events, his suspense would be sooner at an end. — Like the condemned wretch dreads the boon of a temporary reprieve, he feared his courage might not last out to the end.

Hurrying on, therefore, by rail, immediately landing, he left his servant to extricate his luggage from the Custom House, and follow him into Somerset and, but for the cares tugging at his heart, deep would have been his sense of relief at exchanging the monotony of his stifling "state-room" for the fragrant breezes of Wiltshire plains, over which he was speeding. The warm, earthy smell, always so refreshing after long confinement in a saline atmosphere, was rendered more usually grateful by the invigorating influence of May; hawthorn hedges, already in full foliage, sprang here and there by flowerdrifts as white as snow; the fields, greener than the pastures — for the pastures, with their exuberant kingcups, were tinged with gold.

But all might have been as the Lybian desert, if any pleasure taken by poor Arthur in the landscape. Miserable mortal that he was, — on his way, as pensioner of the cousin whom he loved, to take to heart a wife he had ceased to love! —

It afforded him, however, some comfort, that the meeting was to take place at Higham Grange, rather than at Cleveland. At Cleveland, where he had vowed so many vows, and sighed so many sighs, in honour of the fair-faced Florence, his conscience would have re-uked him for the outrage he was about to perpetrate. — In a strange place, in a new house, he should meet her as a new being, rather than as the woman he had so often sworn to love, for time and for eternity.

It was evening when the fly in which he left the railway-station entered the park-gates of Higham Grange; i. e. that portion of evening which is apportioned as the dinner-hour of an English country-house. The woman at the lodge, who dropped a curtesy as she held back the gate, probably mistook him for an invited dinner guest. For he had not courage to inquire whether the family were at home, or whether “they” were still staying at the Grange. — For all the world contained, he could not at that moment have pronounced the name of “Horsford.”

On approaching the house, on whose innumerable windows the setting sun was brightly shining, he noticed two figures seated on a bench under a group of fine old ilex trees, dark with age, and looking their blackest by contrast with the tender green of the surrounding vegetation; two figures, which, as he drew nearer, he perceived to be those of the old squire and his daughter. *Hastily rising at sight of an approaching carriage, they*

advanced towards the road, evidently curious concerning the unexpected visitor.

Just as he could have wished! — The embarrassment of a formal meeting would thus be avoided. Hastily stopping the fly, he jumped out and hurried towards them.

Rapid, however, as was his pace, he had time to note that the poor old squire was dreadfully broken; that he looked shabby, spare, and shaky. Florence, too, was changed. But for the better. Simply dressed, and usually pale, her depressed aspect roused all the generous sympathies of his susceptible nature. How much more when, on recognizing him, she clasped her hands with unmistakeably impulsive emotion; and before he could reach the spot where she was standing, would, but that she clung to her father's arm, have fallen fainting to the ground.

From that arm, he took her — deeply touched by her agitation; and folding her in his own, endeavoured with unaffected sympathy, to tranquillise her rising sorrow and wipe the heavy tears from her cheek.

Instead of tendering the ceremonious compliments with which he came prepared, he burst into very sincere apologies for having taken her by surprise.

It was not till they reached the house, and were seated side by side, and hand in hand, in the old library while the squire hobbled off to announce to his wife the unexpected advent of her future son-in-law, that he could

trived to make her understand the cause of his being there. That he was the first to announce the arrival of the Pearl of the Ocean, which, retarded by adverse weather, had for some days been anxiously looked for, seemed unaccountable, till he explained that, for expedition sake, he had crossed the country direct from Southampton.

"And Caroline?" — he added, looking round, as if he missed something, on finding the usually fluent Florence startled into dumbness — "Where is she? — Won't she come down and see me?" —

"Come down? — Have you not heard; — have you not even seen the newspapers?"

"Not one, since I left Jamaica."

"It will be news to you, then, that Charles and Caroline were married on Monday last. They are gone to Paris. The Turbervilles are to join them, next month, on the Rhine."

"Hardly fair of Charles Turberville!" said Arthur, a little nettled. "It was thoroughly understood between us, that our marriages were to be solemnised at the same time. He seemed to have obtained your consent to the double wedding; and I hurried home in that expectation."

"Charles proposed such an arrangement, in the first instance," replied Florence, who had every justification for attributing *his* annoyance to impatience for the happy event, "because every one supposed you would start

from Jamaica immediately on receiving his letter. — When you wrote, instead of coming, he called you a *procrastinating* fellow. — The next mail, he fancied would perhaps bring fresh excuses; and Mr. and Mrs. Turberville, being opposed to further delay, which would derange all their plans for the summer, insisted that their son should wait no longer."

"Very selfish, and very unkind!"

"They perhaps imagined that you would not like — that you might consider it wrong, — to be married so soon after a family bereavement, and in such very deep mourning."

"Mourning may always be laid aside for a wedding," rejoined Arthur, with a bitter smile. "However, I daresay the Turbervilles had reasons of their own for hastening the ceremony. — Are you better now, dear Florence?" he added, on perceiving that tears were still occasionally stealing down the pale cheeks of his *fiancée*.

Her reply was suspended by the sudden bursting open of the library-door; and Mrs. Horsford flying towards him, brought with her a powerful whiff of aromatic vinegar and a well-got up display of maternal emotion.

"My dearest Arthur! — How well you are looking! — How gratifying, after all our troubles, to welcome you here at last! — The Turbervilles fancied that you would not come for ages. — But I knew you better."

"They had no right to suppose so. Nothing!"

business detained me. Nothing but illness would have detained me longer."

"Still I must blame you, my dearest Arthur, for not sending us a word of warning. — We are not just now equal to surprises. Our spirits have been sorely shaken. — This dear girl's in particular," — she added, on seeing that the face of the sobbing Florence was fairly hidden in her handkerchief, while the utmost *she* could accomplish was to apply her own, theatrically, to a pair of tearless eyes.

Explanations or expostulations would have been of little use. But Arthur Rawdon sincerely wished that the squire had not been in such haste to apprise the wife of his bosom of the arrival of her abhorring son-in-law.

"It seems that your haste to be with us has even brought you here without passing through London?" she resumed, half interrogatively. "By this *détour*, my dear Arthur, you have, at all events, escaped a thousand painful cares, connected with the sad event which has cast so deep a gloom over your family."

"If I may be permitted to claim the privilege of a new-comer, my dear Mrs. Horsford," he said, impatiently interrupting her lachrymose allusions, "let me implore the favour of you to spare me, the first evening, all reference to painful or personal subjects. As far as we can, let *us* dismiss the past. We have all suffered. Let *us* forget every thing, just now," he added, kindly

taking the hand of the agitated girl by his side, "except that we are once more united, — till death us do part."

The quotation was not happy. Yet it seemed to rejoice the ear of the mother-in-law-expectant; who immediately reminded him that the first gong had sounded, and that he must release her darling Flo. to dress for dinner.

He desired no better; nor did they meet again till dinner was announced, and the liberal administration of cold water externally and internally, had smoothed down the swollen eyes and ruffled countenance of poor Florence, and reduced the husky voice of young Rawdon to almost its usual tone.

Scarcely had they taken their places round the well-served table, when Arthur was shocked to perceive that the pinched nose and fallen cheeks of the old Squire, were not the only indications of his decline. A foolish, fatuous laugh betrayed, every now and then, that his mind was breaking.

"I almost think, dearest Arthur," said Mrs. Hocking, with one of her blindest smiles, soon after they were seated, "that Lord and Lady Higham, could they have contemplated this happy reunion of our family circle, would have remained a few days longer at the Grange. But urgent duties recalled them to London the day after the wedding. Lord Higham's new office demands, as soon after his inauguration, double exertion; and the Army is to be presented on her elevation to the peerage."

at the next drawing-room, and has her dress to think about."

It was not for "dearest Arthur" to avow, in reply, his gratitude to government for having released him, at such a crisis, from the observation of two additional members of the family. He said only what civility required; — something about the acquisition to the aristocracy of so perfect a gentleman as Sir James Armstead and, — as approaching nearer the mother-in-law's perceptions, — the beauty of the wife and family diamonds that were about to illustrate his appearance at Court.

"Yes, — I flatter myself Lady Higham will do no discredit to the peerage. And some day or other, my dear Arthur," — Mrs. Horsford was beginning in her most mellifluous tones, when a glance at the pale face of poor Florence suspended the words on her lips. Whatever she was about to say or soothsay, was lost to her son-in-law and posterity.

The pause which ensued seemed to render the poor old Squire uneasy. That Arthur, in accepting his abrupt proposal to take a glass of sherry with him, appealed kindly, and affectionately to his daughter to join them, was almost a relief; and, while performing a ceremony which seemed suddenly to recal to his mind the health-drinkings and thanks-returnings of the wedding-day, he endeavoured to cheer the spirits of the newly-landed Creole by a description of its festivities, and the magni-

ficent presents lavished by the Turbervilles on the bride of their only son; -- the pearls of price, -- the new travelling-carriage, containing more than the accommodation of Noah's ark, -- and the dressing-box of ebony and *vermeil*, that contained little short of a service of plate.

"Somewhat inconvenient appendages for a continental tour," observed Arthur, "as your son Robert could have apprised them."

"I don't think Mr. or Mrs. Turberville would have given much heed to poor Bob's suggestions," replied the candid Squire. "But I heard George Marsham suggest to Charley, the day before the wedding, that, as they were about to become railway travellers, they had best leave the *dormeuse* and dressing-box safe at the Abbey."

"George Marsham? -- What had he to do with the wedding?" -- inquired Arthur, a little surprised.

"Only that, as Charles Turberville's nearest relation, he officiated as his best man. Two of the brothers were staying at the Abbey; a Guardsman, and the Treasury genius who is thought so much of. -- Very agreeable, both of them."

"I had understood that the wedding was to be as private as possible?" rejoined Arthur drily.

"And so it was, my dear boy. In consideration of -- in kindness to --"

The real head of the family saw it was time to interfere.

"Mr. Horsford means that it was as private as was compatible with the position held by the Turbervilles in his neighbourhood," said she, rather stiffly. "They chose, of course, that some portion of their family should witness the marriage of their son. And as Lord Brookdale happened to be in waiting, Lady Brookdale, as one of Mrs. Turberville's oldest friends, proposed to come down with the Highams, in order that her little daughter might assist poor Flo. in her duties as brides-maid."

"The Marshams and Brookdales?" exclaimed Arthur, addressing his pale *fiancée*. — "In short, it was a very gay little wedding!"

"Not what it would have been had we remained happy and prosperous at Cleveland," observed the poor squire with a mournful shake of the head, which operated as an effective check to Arthur's queries. But Mrs. Horsford, having been put on her mettle by what sounded almost like a rebuke on the part of Mr. Rawdon of Heckington, chose to be heard.

"And *for* a private wedding," added she, "I must say it was as pretty a one as ever was seen. Amy's was a grand and showy affair; but it cost a world of pains and mint of money. Now on *this* occasion, no pains had been spared to keep the event dark, and the day quiet. But somehow or other, the mystery oozed out, for Mr. Turberville will never obtain a premium for secret-keep-

ing! So when we reached the church, what should we find at the gate but Amy's school-children, in brass-bust dresses, holding wicker baskets tied with white favours ready to throw flowers before the bride; — and, as coming out again, hundreds of Mr. Turberville's tenants and labourers, who had trudged over without his knowledge, could not be prevented from dragging the carriages of the bride and bridegroom back to the Grange. — And *such* cheering when they made their appearance in the porch! — It must have been heard for miles round!

"Grand doings, indeed," said Arthur, amused by her maternal ostentation. "I sadly fear," he added, addressing himself cheerfully to Florence, "that *we* must dispense with obsequious tenants and Lady Brookdale!"

Again did Mrs. Horsford contrive to intercept her daughter's reply, by calling his attention to the beauty of the forced fruit just then placed on the table; adding nauseous eulogies of the liberality with which Lord Higham had taken care to provide them throughout the winter with the finest produce of his garden and succession-houses, instead of having them forwarded to him, as usual, to Park Lane.

Had her encomiums been prompted by genuine gratitude, they would have done her honour. But Arthur Rawdon was now too familiar with her artifices not to perceive that these vauntings of the generosity of her Right Honourable son-in-law, purported only to afford

If a lesson and example; just as the boasts of the
and grandeur of the Turbervilles with which she
him throughout the evening, were intended to re-
him that is was by no means poor Florence who
making the great match of the family! —

CHAPTER V.

Of the four individuals who surrounded the following morning the cheerful breakfast-room of the Grange, they had retired the preceding evening at an un-early hour, on pretext of the fatigues and agitation of the day, none looked refreshed by the interim. A certain air of mutual constraint still embarrassed the portment.

But by degrees, feelings more natural expressed themselves. There is a peculiar sociability about an English breakfast, the inaugurating incense of the domestic day. Among foreigners, the morning fast is broken by a cup of coffee, or a cigar, taken without ceremony; what is called the second breakfast, towards noon, is followed by a heavy meal. But the English breakfast-table, with its glittering accessories, its steaming urn, and various household delicacies, — above all, its self-service, allowing all interruption to the interchange of mutual salutations or plans and projects for the day, exerts a wholesome influence over the spirits.

Arthur found himself insensibly soothed, by the

Cups which cheer but not inebriate.

by the lovely face of the lady in the white muslin wrapper, by whom they were concocted. Decidedly, he had never seen Florence Horsford look half so pretty! The contrast afforded by her delicate features to the monstrous faces of his attendants at Fredville or Hurtsfield, — nay, even to the sallow complexions of poor Mary and Martha Harman, — might, perhaps, in some degree enhance his estimate of her attractions. But he was forced to admit to himself, that her beautiful face, and gentle voice now softened by the chastening of adversity, had not maintained, in absence and at a distance, the pre-eminence which was their due. But it was impossible not to recognise the admirable beauty of her who was about to become his wife. He admitted now, as during his Oxford vacations, that Florence Horsford was one of the prettiest creatures in the world.

He was beginning to long to tell her so, or something thereto approaching, as they stood together at the window opening to the lawn, through which the balmy air of May breathed warm and genial into their faces; but Mrs. Horsford attached herself immoveably to their side. To whatever Arthur whispered, *she* responded. He seemed bent upon forestalling his glances at the delicate cheek and slender form of her “darling Flo.” Even when, hoping to get rid of her, he beguiled his lovely *fiancée* into the conservatory which circled the southern front of the breakfast-room, there, like an echo to their steps, pattered the idle ejaculations of the off-

cious mother-in-law; protesting that "he could not be sincere in his admiration of that miniature Eden, since he must have seen far more exquisite flowers and plants in the West Indies."

Not particularly desirous just then to be reminded of the West Indies in any shape, Arthur allowed her to gabble on, unanswered. But it was not a reply she wanted. She was there only as an obstacle, or marplot. She was there, only as she had so often been in former days when penniless younger sons were impending over one of her daughters, to frustrate all danger of a *tête-à-tête*.

"Yet would you believe it, my dear Arthur," she continued, while they were inhaling the delicious fragrance of the *Mandevillea*, or admiring the sunshine shed on the walls by the golden blossoms of the *Hebertia* — "would you believe that Amy, who used to be so fond of flowers, never so much as took the trouble, when she was here the other day, to go round the house! Poor Harkwell, the head gardener, was quite hurt by her indifference; for he had put forward a new orchid, which he fancied would charm 'her ladyship' even more than her new coronet."

"And so it would have done, mamma," interrupted Florence, almost as impatient as Arthur of her importunate attendance, — "but that poor Amy had never before been parted from her children, and was miserable

whole time she was here. She had no thoughts to throw upon orchids!"

Pleased with her kindly interpretation, Arthur entreated permission to fetch her garden-hat and overshoes, that she might accompany him into the grounds. And when Mrs. Horsford began to prophesy rain, and create other impediments, he said in so decided a tone that he needed to have a walk and talk with Florence, that she had not courage to raise further objections.

"My servant can scarcely arrive till the second train," he said, when Florence quitted them for a moment to prepare for her stroll. "Till my luggage reaches me, I am unable to despatch my letters to town, to prepare the way for my appearance. But when once that task is accomplished, I must think of following; — of business, — of all the plagues and penalties of life. Till then, I am a gentleman at large, and wish to enjoy myself. My greatest enjoyment must be, of course, uninterrupted conversation with my future wife."

The hint was so broad a one, that the not usually pale complexion of Mrs. Horsford varied for a moment. But she speedily resumed her self-complacency; and having followed the young couple as far as the hall door, stood smiling as she watched their departing footsteps; — kissing her hand, with sportive tenderness, as they vanished into the shrubbery.

But into how different a face did those false features react, when all trace of the happy pair disappeared;

and she turned back into the hall to go in search of the Squire, and inflict on him her conjugal admonitions of the day! —

A great relief meanwhile to Arthur to escape the thralldom of her prying eyes, and shabby inferences. The close and trimly shrubbery verged, after a few hundred yards, into a beautiful copse; whose turf paths were bright with spring flowers, — wood-anemones, violets, and lilies of the valley; while the half-developed foliage of the oaks, and their pendent blossoms scarcely sufficed to conceal the innumerable song-bird flitting from bough to bough. The very atmosphere breathed happiness and peace; and there was more than the banality of a common-place remark in the observation with which Florence at length broke silence, that — “Charles and Caroline had auspicious weather for their journey, — that it seemed made for a honeymoon!” —

“The more reason for my regret that our own marriage was not also solemnised on Monday,” rejoined Arthur. “For my own part, I have earned a right to fair weather; for my passage home was a succession of storms.”

His companion seemed grateful to him for introducing a topic that involved no personal allusions; and immediately proceeded to question him concerning his sea-adventures, and the life and landscapes of Jamaica.

But though she infused into her inquiries as much interest as her mother's daughter could always want

to assume, it was clear that, while he answered her questions, her eye, ear and mind, were absent. None of those quiet retorts or lively sallies, of the days of Clevelands. Her manner was almost deferential: — her countenance, almost vacant. —

He had no right to resent her change of manner towards him. It was *his* alienation which had created hers. It was his coldness which had estranged her heart. He must make it his duty, if not his pleasure, to recall her former predilections. To soften and attach her into domestic companionship, as Lord Higham had attached her sister, he must devote himself to the cultivation of her better instincts. Since they were to be united for time and for eternity, he trusted it would be for “better” rather than for “worse.”

Still it was vexatious, that, instead of discoursing with him heart to heart on topics connected with their relative position, she chose to indulge in idle chit-chat; — such as the attentions her family had received from the Bradden Branshaws during their sojourn at the Grange, and the improvement which the snubs of London-life had produced in Mrs. Ommany's foolish sons. Though he had expressly entreated to be exonerated from painful family reminiscences, he would rather have found her more alive to the loveliness of nature on that auspicious day, than to the petty incidents of an uninteresting neighbourhood.

All this miserable gossip at length so wearied him

spirits, that he was even thankful when they came from the leafy covert, so full of poetry, so full of that "could please, if any thing could please;" and, having wound back through the park towards spreading ilexes, under whose shade he had found resting the preceding afternoon, he was much relieved to find the bench untenanted.

Seated by her side, he should at least, while listening to her prattle, luxuriate in a view of that lovely face, whose exquisite delicacy would impart if no charm a palliative, to the insipid anecdotes she relating.

But as if bent on neutralising every advantage was desirous to concede, Florence now began to tell Tiny.

"You do not appear very enthusiastic about F. ville!" she suddenly observed. "Your description of maica will scarcely tempt Sophia Corbet to visit the V. Indies!"

"I hope not — I sincerely hope not," was his ab rejoinder. "Tiny is much more wanted at home. was my poor brother's wish, quite as much as it is that she should reside at Northover."

"Continue to reside at Northover?" — added Flore in a hesitating, yet significant tone.

"That is, till she is married," added he, correcting himself. "Sir Barton Frere is of course too great a for Henry Corbet's quiet establishment. Through

pose even *that* has been improved since his daughter became a woman of fortune."

"I have heard of no changes; except that she has sent her brothers to Eton, to learn manners, instead of the Grammar School where they were learning writing and ciphering."

"Quite right! Should Lady Frere have no children, they will succeed to the Fredville estate."

Miss Horsford seemed almost piqued at hearing him refer to his alienated West India property, without a syllable of blame or accusation. But it was not, just then, her cue to be resentful.

"But is Tiny *really* to marry Sir Barton Frere?" she inquired, with a smile of disparagement.

"So Charles Turberville wrote me word. And *his* information on the subject ought to be authentic: his cousin George Marsham being the official shadow of the new Privy Councillor."

"I don't think Mr. Marsham knows or cares much about the matter," replied Florence. "Charles Turberville probably wished to enliven a dull letter by a piece of news. Sophia Corbet refused Victor Ommany, last autumn, and his mother, who was anxious for the match on finding Miss Corbet turn out an heiress, told us that she assigned as the motive of her rejection, her determination to live single for the sake of her brothers; — some say, in consequence of a promise made to her step-mother on her deathbed."

"A most heroic plea for spinsterhood!" was Arthur's bitter rejoinder. "As if my cousin had not sufficient grounds for refusing a prating jackanapes like Viscount Ommaney, without quite so romantic a pretext."

Perceiving that he was vexed, Florence endeavored to modify her statement.

"After all, it is not impossible that there may be some engagement between her and Sir Barton," said Arthur. "For what but a desire to reside in the neighborhood of Northover, can possibly account for his eagerness to possess Cleveland?"

"Does Sir Barton wish to possess Cleveland?" exclaimed Arthur, with sudden interest; — perhaps the idea of a place he so much disliked, falling to the share of a man he equally detested.

"He has been in treaty for the purchase ever since — over since, — that is —" She had not courage to refer in direct terms to the ruin of her family.

"Ever since Mr. Horsford wished to dispose of it," said Arthur, composedly.

"My poor father, Heaven knows, has no wish to do with the place. But I fear it is inevitable, unless a very unlooked-for change should occur in his prospects — Robert, indeed, is of opinion that, come what may, it would be an advantage to get rid of it, and clear every incumbrance."

"It would be presumption on my part, who know little of Mr. Horsford's affairs, to give an opinion."

cerning their management," replied Arthur, in a more conciliatory tone. "But with his home-circle so much diminished, — his daughters married, — his sons dispersed, — Clevelands appears almost too large for him. And it is the very thing for a placeman; — the very thing for a Sir Barton Frere; — who wants a Tusculum to which the express-train will convey him from Downing Street, within an hour, to breathe and think, at leisure."

"Provided he can breathe and think within reach of Sophy Corbet, no doubt he will be satisfied," retorted Miss Horsford. "And both my father and Bob are inclined to close with his proposals. It is only mamma who demurs. She rather wants Mr. Turberville to take it, for Charles and Carry. The Abbey is an inconvenient distance from town."

"It can't be too far, for the sake of my friend Charley," rejoined Arthur, frankly. "His safety and happiness depend on his leading a quiet country life, more or less under the control of his parents."

"Not a very pleasant prospect for his wife, and moral extinction for himself!" rejoined Florence, shrugging her shoulders. "Turberville Abbey is a comfortable residence, certainly. But so thoroughly out of the world! — So remote from all that is intellectual or refined."

Arthur could scarcely refrain from a smile. What a *falsetto flight* for his pretty Flo: — a whole octave

higher than her natural voice! Was it Lord Higham's political advancement, or George Marsham's pamphlet on the subject of the new building, which had given such a start to her imagination?

"I don't conceive, however," was all he replied "that the Turbervilles would be pleased at losing sight of their only child. And they seem to have acted so on occasion of his marriage."

"Yes, — kindly enough. And they are only attaching themselves to Carry. But it would be better for all parties if the young people had a home of their own."

"*That*, I am convinced, was Mrs. Hornford's suggestion!" was the involuntary exclamation of Arthur.

"Mamma is certainly of that opinion, — because she knows the world and human nature."

It was not for her future son-in-law to apprise his daughter with how very limited a portion of either, the petty manœuvrer was conversant.

"Still, I don't think Carry inclines much to the purchase of Cleveland. The place is so out of condition. There would be so much to be done. And, as George Marsham says, they could make nothing better of it after all, than a cockney villa."

Both the man quoted, and the opinion quoted, were against the better taste of Arthur Rawdon. It was thus that Florence should have allowed a complete stranger to disparage her childhood's home.

he remember with what spirit poor Tiny had resented his own criticism of the shortcomings of Grenfield House! —

“At all events, the place would be better suited to a London official, like Sir Barton Frere,” he observed, “than to a young fellow of Charles Turberville’s age, whose chief object in a country-life consists in field-sports; and the shooting at Clevelands, and hunting of Hertfordshire, are a mere joke. The manor at Turberville, on the other hand, is a noble one; and admirably preserved.”

“It would be curious to see Sir Barton established there, and Tiny doing the honours of Clevelands!” said Florence, carelessly.

“It would be something more than curious,” said Arthur, in a low voice, shocked at her heartlessness.

“Why, I have no doubt she would acquit herself very well?” added his companion in a tone of patronage. “How well she got on at Northover; and how much she made out of that wretched little garden!”

“She made it, — what a woman of taste and refinement can make out of far worse materials, — a paradise on earth!” rejoined Arthur, with swelling indignation.

But Florence Horsford was not the high-spirited or rather pettish Florence of former days, and chose to overlook the gauntlet thus flung down.

“Her merits are very generally appreciated,” she re-

plied. "No one is more popular *now*. All this is beginning to accord her the superiority which Highams discovered in her long before she became heiress."

"They were indeed her first friends; and sincerely attached to your sister."

"She would not, however, accompany her Harry's wedding, the other day. It is true her mourning was too recent to be laid aside, even for And then, she had been with poor Mrs. Enmore out her illness, quite to the last. — And just at the moment of witnessing such melancholy scenes" —

"Of what are you talking?" — interrupted his face ghastly with horror so manifest, that sternation began to impart itself to his companion.

"I beg your pardon, dear Arthur. I forgot my injunction to us not to advert, at present, to your afflictions."

"To *mine*? — It was to your own I beg would refrain from alluding. — But what of me? What of my mother? — Why do you say *poor* Enmore?" —

"Is it possible you can be still ignorant that she has been nearly three weeks in her grave?" murmured Florence, — tears — but rather of tender sympathy — beginning to steal down her cheeks.

The distracted looks and clasped hands of Arthur Lawdon afforded a sufficient reply.

"It was on that account," she resumed, "that the Turbervilles hastened the wedding. They did not wish you to arrive in the midst of a gay celebration, in which at present you could take no part. But we hoped — we believed — that the newspapers had apprised you; and that it was to avoid a further stress upon your spirits, you had avoided passing through town."

Still, he uttered not a syllable. — He seemed paralysed by the shock. —

"DEAD!" — he muttered, at last, in a husky unnatural voice. "And she must have died immediately after receiving my last letter; — doubtless of a heart broken by the intelligence it conveyed! — My poor unfortunate mother!" —

CHAPTER VI.

To hasten to town — to hurry away from the Harfords — was his first impulse, — and speedily accomplished. Again leaving his servant and baggage to follow him by the evening train, he was soon on his road to London. The six hours of the journey passed as one. His senses were stunned — his eyes seemed closed. He had scarcely recovered his perfect consciousness when he arrived at those lonesome Chambers in the Albany, where he had been some days expected and prepared for by the porter's wife; who pointed, with an air of solemn deference, to heaps of letters lying on the table.

The only one he opened was a black-bordered envelope, addressed in Miss Corbet's hand-writing.

It contained but a few words: —

"As soon as you arrive, dearest cousin, come to me at Northover. I have much to say, which it would be painful to write."

Without further refreshment, therefore, taking a bit of bread and glass of water, he started off. Little more than another hour would convey him to what he could not help regarding as "home;" the presence of

he only surviving human being who thoroughly sympathised with his feelings. — At that moment, he had forgotten there was a Sir Barton Frere in the world. — At that moment, she was again his own Tiny.

A bribe to the mail-train guard secured him a compartment to himself; — how essential to his agitated state of mind! It was nearly a year since he had seen Sophia Corbet; and how many painful explanations must be exchanged between them. What might he not have to learn respecting his mother's last moments! — She might have cursed him as a parricide, and prohibited, on penalty of her eternal malediction, the marriage he had announced! —

On the other hand, his cousin, whose letters had referred exclusively to his own affairs, might interrogate him concerning that lost brother, the very sound of whose name was as a dagger thrust into his heart. She might want to talk of Fredville, — of the grave where he was laid, — of the reverence paid to his memory, — of the justice dealt to his murderers. All that he had contemplated with anguish, as likely to await him at his first meeting with his mother — his unfortunate mother — was perhaps that very night in store for him! —

But, by degrees, the charm habitually exercised over his mind by the influence of Placidia, and the anticipation of her gentle voice and serene countenance, obtained its usual ascendancy. He felt as if about to drift into calmer seas, — into a haven from the storm. It was

almost a matter of regret to him that he was not free to approach her as her pensioner, the object of her alms giving, as of late he had sometimes bitterly anticipated. But his feelings towards her were now altered and subdued. Now, she was the ministering angel who he smoothed the dying pillow of his "child-changed" mother. - - Now, she was once more the kindly, humane cousin with whom he had been wont to stroll under the elms of Northover.

To his amazement, he found the family sitting up in expectation of his arrival. No grand preparations. No forced fruit or flowers, as at Higham Grange. But open arms and open hearts, as well as hospitable fare; and the unembarrassed warmth with which Tiny, at the meeting as at their parting, clung to his embrace, he saw at once that it was a sister only who awaited him.

During his hurried journey, his thoughts, wandering occasionally to the affianced wife he had been forced to quit so abruptly, could not but inspire a fear that his recent accession of fortune had produced the abject deference exhibited towards him by Mrs. Horsford and her submissive husband. But he also fancied, and hoped that the depressed spirits of Florence arose equally from his recent bereavement. It was doubtless her grievous consciousness of the evil influence exercised by the announcement of their marriage to his heart-broken mother which produced her altered looks and irregular emotion.

But how different the case with Tiny! No self-accusation to blanch *her* cheek, or agitate her nerves! And though she wore a suit of sables as gloomy as at their last interview in Hertford Street, nothing in her self-governed deportment evinced perturbation of mind. She was now mourning only for one of the sad events naturally interwoven with every human lot; and all she wanted to say to that dear cousin who was not only her mother's nephew, but who so singularly resembled her poor lost Willy, was, that his mother had forgiven and blessed him before she died!

How she had been forced to plead and implore on bended knees, ere she obtained that concession, it was needless he should ever know. Enough that Mrs. Enmore had been worked upon to say, before her rigid lips closed for ever, — "Then let him make her his wife. Forgive us, oh, God! our trespasses as we forgive them that trespass against us. — May they be happy together, Tiny, may they be happy! — See that Harding and Parkins have their annuity punctually paid. See that — (what is this grasping my throat?) — See that — God bless you, Tiny! — God bless my poor son!" —

The frenzy of passion which had preceded the concession, — the paroxysm produced by perusing the letter from Fredville in which Arthur announced, with little ceremony or precaution, that he was on the point of returning to England for the purpose of making Florence *his* wife, she had from the first resolved to keep

for ever from his knowledge. No good could arise from the communication. And if perfect candour be a virtue as well as a delight, a discreet suppression of facts that impart only pain, and of which the disclosure falls short of a duty, may be accounted a merit scarcely inferior.

With that velvet softness of touch which supplied with the kindly-natured, the tact exhibited by the worldly, she handled the most painful subjects without inflicting pain. Facts or opinions, which, in the hands of a Mrs. Horsford, would have created vexation and opposition, were accepted without challenge when related by Tiny; — not crudely, or curtly, or coldly; — but with a charitable interpretation of the motives in which they originated.

"My poor aunt had not much to bequeath," she added, after making it clear to her cousin that Mrs. Enmore's last mention of him was made in the most Christian spirit. "And as she knew you would have forward command the full enjoyment of your property, and that my own income would be doubled by her death, she wisely resolved to leave the little in her power to the relative who needed it most. — You would not have liked to reside in Hertford Street, Arthur. You would not have endured its dingy furniture and meagre comforts; which, for poor Lucretia Rawdon, to whom Mrs. Enmore has assigned the ten years' remnant of her life, constitute the utmost luxury."

"But Lucretia cannot afford to live in so large a house."

"My aunt has settled on her a few hundreds a-year, which, in addition to Willy's annuity, will convert her into an opulent woman. And surely no member of the Rawdon family will resent that one of its survivors is thus rescued from poverty; more especially, since such was the influence of Harding and Parkins over the mind of my poor aunt during the last few months of her life, that, had she not made her cousin Lucretia her residuary legatee, we should have seen one or other of them succeed to property which ought not to go out of the family."

"She is heartily welcome to all she has got, poor old creature!" said Arthur, — far less interested than he ought to have been in the proprietorship of his father's plate and library. "Heckington and its accumulations more than suffice *me*. You have relieved my mind from an unspeakable weight, Tiny, by satisfying me that my mother died in peace and charity with a son who had afforded her only vexation and disappointment. — Had I been aware of her illness, however, — had you written, dearest, as you ought to have done, — to tell me she was declining, — I should not have loitered on, at Fredville, when once that wretched trial was brought to a conclusion. Had I then returned, a reconciliation might have been effected; and I should have spared myself one of the poignant regrets that will embitter my future days."

Miss Corbet listened in prudent silence. — Why should a still deeper regret overcloud his life? — Why

should a dark shadow haunt the home awaiting from learning that Mrs. Enmore's illness and death solely from the excitement of finding that, instead of marriage with herself, to which she had obstinately looked forward to reconsolidate the Enmore and Rawdon estates, — a marriage between Heckington and Fred rather than between her son and niece, — he was able to connect himself with the ruined family which, in its palmy days, she despised! —

He slept, therefore, that night, for the first time many, strengthened and comforted. He was under the roof of loving friends. He was subjected to a beneficial influence. Henry Corbet had wrung his hand, in bidding him good night, almost as paternally as if it been that of his own Alfred; and the weary, hard master of Heckington Hall closed his eyes with a benediction on all around, and thanksgivings that his apprehensions were at an end.

His mother had forgiven him before she died! —

Next morning, he rose to May sunshine, and the calmness of a pleasant country home. At his request poor Tiny accompanied him to the village church, where beside the husband and parents by whom she had so harshly dealt with, Mrs. Enmore had desired to be laid; and Miss Corbet, who with her father and Lucy Rawdon attended the ceremony, even to the verge of the family vault, appreciated the few faltering words of gratitude by which her cousin recognised the service

After the performance of a duty so sacred, both parties, had their inclinations been consulted, would have turned home to silence and seclusion, for the remainder of the morning. Even after getting rid of Susan Moore, now the custodian of Heckington Church, neither of them spoke. But there was perfect sympathy between them. They felt as one. They felt as thoroughly united in heart and soul, as man and woman should never feel unless the altar has solemnised or is about to solemnise, their union. But it would have been difficult for those twain, as they threaded the venerable oaks planted by their forefathers, united by kindred blood, united by common afflictions, by common reminiscences, and above all by the geniality of the season and familiarity of the scene, to feel otherwise.

Henry Corbet was not, however, the man within whose jurisdiction sentimentality, even when grounded on rational foundations, ever found encouragement. He knew what Mrs. Enmore had been, through life, — what a thorn in the side of every human being connected with her; and saw no necessity that his daughter, to whom she had been so surly an aunt, or Arthur, with whom, from his boyhood, she had been on harsh and wounding terms, should persuade themselves into any superfluous cherishing of sorrow. Tiny had done her duty to the dying; Arthur had shown becoming respect to the dead; and now, the best thing they could both do was to exert themselves, and resume the customary

duties of life. — Where was the use of regret the past? —

By forcing them to be reasonable, he would, under similar circumstances, have been — But injudicious people, in following that path though they may render themselves acceptable to the Creator, often become extremely unacceptable to fellow-creatures.

"I want you, my dear Arthur," said he, addressing them as they approached the head of the lake of water ornamenting the park, "to admire how much we have been able to do for the lake. You remember how miserably reedy it had become? The brook was insufficient to feed it, and it was degenerating into a swamp. But by good luck, in cleaning it out, we hollowed the bank near the upper dam, and lo! we cut into a capital spring, that supplies I suppose you how many tons of water a day. — And see, there is not so much as a rush on the surface, always full, — and always clear!" —

Arthur looked, and saw, — and cared not for the bright mirror exhibited by the Heckington lake just then, only the blue sky over its still expanse.

"If I were you, Arthur," resumed his uncle, "I am engaged with the survey of his handiwork, — I would plant yonder Northern bank. It wants clothed. The naked hill was always an eye-sore; and a belt of Scotch pines intermixed with beeches and ash

make a show, and be cheerful all the year round. When once you are married and settled, Arthur, you will probably spend your winters at Heckington. You're fond of hunting, I think? — I remember meeting you, pink, two years ago, when you were stopping at Melands."

"In those days, I was fond of many things I have ceased to care for," replied his nephew, in a fretful tone. "And I hope to spend my winters in some warmer spot in Hertfordshire, — the coldest county in England!"

By this assertion, he brought the farmer heavily on his shoulders. Even Tiny thought it necessary to rouse herself in defence of her native county.

"At all events," replied young Rawdon, replying rather to his own arguments than to theirs, "a winter or two must elapse before Heckington is placed in habitable order."

"Tu, tu, tu, tu! — It is in *excellent* order at this moment," cried Mr. Corbet. "The repairs of the roof cost a matter of two hundred pounds! And since we put in the patent hot-air stove, in the basement-story, (an expensive job, Arthur, but the only means of warming so large a house,) — there has not been a vestige of damp, from hall to attic. — Has there, Tiny?" —

"I spoke rather of ornamental than useful repairs," rejoined Arthur, despondingly. "I must not disgust my niece with her new home by introducing her to the faded, unfashioned furniture, decaying there for a century."



When we visited the place together, two years ago, she told me how odious she thought it. Now, in the present state of her family-fortunes, she may not li- fault; and I am therefore doubly bound to ex- then promised."

His cousin, who was leaning on his arm, approvingly. And as her father had just stepped to scatter with his walking-stick a couple of molehills, he added, in a lower voice — "Be- kindest thing I can do, is to remove her from beyond her mother's reach. The little I have them, since my return, convinces me that if she to become my wife, instead of Mrs. Horsford's I must cut the wires of the electric telegraph. or two on the continent would break that per- fluence."

"An influence which might have proved had the family still resided at Cleveland; but the Horsfords will never be in your house, except by invitation. And you would be so much in a home of your own, than rambling about the continent! — I am beginning to think, with Mr. Turberville, that half the young people who come unsettled for life by squandering their happiness in foreign countries."

"Little Tiny turned moralist and preacher!" pered her cousin, with the first smile she had seen on his face since his arrival.

"Because, dear Arthur, I have it so much at heart that you should reside at Heckington! — Throughout our recent family affliction, my consolation has been that *now* you would assume your proper place as head of the family, and make it all it ought to be."

Again he pressed her arm.

"How little you know my inadequacy to such a task! — Heckington has passed within the last century into many incompetent hands; but into none so incompetent as mine! — No, no, Tiny! — Your father (and here he comes to say yes or no!) must still abide at Northover, to be the real guardian of the property; and you, darling, will be at no such great distance from him as to prevent your superintending our improvements, and affording him your taste."

"Still, Arthur, however much interested in Heckington, I can exercise no authority. I can never be what you and Florence would be. — Think better of it, cousin. — Settle, at once, under the roof of our fathers, and afford me the benefit of such kindly, such valued neighbours!" —

Henry Corbet, with his good-humoured, full-blown face, was just then approaching; — talking about mole-traps, and the parish rat-catcher. — The answer of his nephew must be brief and speedy.

"No, dear Tiny," said he, "I have not at present, *the slightest intention* of residing at Heckington."

CHAPTER VII.

IN accordance rather with his own plans than the wish of the Horsfords, Mr. Rawdon determined his marriage should be solemnised at once, regard to his family-mourning. Lord Higham, the only member of the family who seconded him. Perceiving that the broken old squire was drawing his end, and that if the match were, in consequence of his death, indefinitely postponed, the wayward and the bridegroom might create insuperable obstacles. He strenuously supported his future brother-in-law's plan that the wedding should be solemnised at Higham by special license; the father and mother of the bride officiating as sole witnesses of the ceremony.

Every thing concurred to render privacy desirable, and the recent demise of Mrs. Enmore afforded a plausible pretext for the curtailment of the festivities which had attended the Turberville celebration.

All the public had to learn, was contained in the formal announcement of the newspapers, that "on the ceremony, the happy couple left the church at Dresden, en route for Switzerland and Italy."

It was only Miss Corbet who, in the contemplative seclusion of Northover, had leisure

in this direction of their travels, that Arthur, still dwelling on the past, was bent upon converting his usual excursion into a pilgrimage; — that he wanted to visit every spot sacred to the memory of his brother; the Dresden where he had been so much beloved; — Interlachen whither he had hurried, in the long-trained outburst of his fraternal affection; — the same, where he had been so brutally repulsed by intervention of Robert Horsford! —

But she felt also, — was it with pain or pleasure? — none of these sacred reminiscences would be confided to his wife.

“Of course, my dear Miss Corbet, we shall have you back among us in spring,” observed little Mrs. William Hartland, in a consolatory tone, the first time she obtained admittance at Northover, after the marriage. She had a letter yesterday from Mrs. Horsford, who is usually anxious, poor dear, to hear what is doing and going on in her old neighbourhood; and *she*, I need not say, has been a little put out by such a huggermugger looking, and this foreign tour. But then, as she says, so long as people are in family-mourning, it don’t much signify where they are. And she adds, *entre nous*, that Mr. Flo. has made up her mind that, winter where they go, they will be in London for the season.”

“I doubt it. Mr. Rawdon dislikes London; and it is more than probable that Florence herself, like Lady Ham, will be less fond of it, now she is settled.”

"Why yes, — as you say, — Mrs. Rawdon will probably be less fond of London life, now she is settled. — But *that* need not prevent them from spending next summer at Heckington. — There is so much for them to do!"

"The very reason my cousin adduced for staying away. He seemed to think the place would be pleasanter to his wife, if she found it complete, instead of beset by bricklayers and carpenters."

"Why certainly, — it would be very disagreeable to be beset with bricklayers and carpenters. But are they going to build, then?"

"I know very little of their plans. Mr. Rawdon has deputed my father to be his clerk of the works."

"And an excellent clerk of the works Mr. Corbet will make! — But it is not true, then, as Mrs. Hornford inquired of me in her letter, that he is about to leave Northover?"

"On the contrary, my father, at his nephew's earnest request, has taken a seven years' lease of the farm."

"And a better tenant, I am sure, it would be impossible to find! — But I fancied, — that is Mrs. Hornford fancied, — that it would be necessary for *you* to proceed to the West Indies, to look after your property; and that, as a matter of course, — as a matter of *propriety*, — Mr. Corbet would accompany you."

"The agent attached to the estate for the last thirty years, still resides there," replied Tiny, a little annoyed

at having to submit to a cross-examination for the benefit of Mrs. Horsford. — "The West Indies have not been propitious to the health of such members of our family as have heretofore visited Fredville."

"No, — the place has certainly not been very propitious to those members of the family who have visited Fredville. Still, as Mrs. Horsford remarks, the eye of the master is everything! — No colonial property is safe unless occasionally superintended by the eye of the master!"

"But as my late cousin, the proprietor of Fredville, had been able to make an accurate survey of the property previous to his cruel death" —

"Cruel, indeed!" interrupted her visitor. "A strange business, was it not? — And who could have imagined, as Mrs. Horsford has often remarked, that while we were enjoying that picnic with you last summer, and the startling news broke up the party, poor Mr. Rawdon was already superseded in his Jamaica estates, as well as at Northover!"

It was something of a trial, even to Placidia, to be thus harassed by the silly Echo of a very mischievous woman. But too wise to indulge in superfluous self-vindication, she allowed Mrs. Hartland to go chattering on.

"Certainly, considering how charming a young man Mr. Rawdon may be considered, he has been most hardly used by his own relations. — The Horsfords alone have *stuck to him* in all his reverses! Even his mother, —

what an extraordinary will his mother would have made; — leaving her house in May Fair and everything she possessed to a half-crazy cousin, whom Mrs. Horsford well recollects that the family was once on the point of locking up in a lunatic asylum."

As this part of the accusation poor Tiny could not controvert, she contented herself with remarking that the house and furniture of the late Mrs. Enmore was not of a nature to have suited the fastidious taste of Arthur and his wife.

"Very likely not, my dear Miss Corbet. But there was no reason for defrauding her eldest son of his right. And as Mrs. Horsford very fairly hints, the house would have been the very thing for *her*; and if they did not choose to inhabit it themselves, they might have lent it to her. — So close to Lady Highham, too; — as every thing she could desire!"

No need to explain that it was perhaps to frustrate such a purpose, Lucretia Rawdon had been selected by Mrs. Enmore to be its proprietress.

"However, you will benefit as much in this case as in that of Fredville," added the officious country-neighbour. "You will of course spend your London season with Miss Rawdon?"

"I have as little taste for London as my cousin Arthur," replied Tiny; "nor have I the slightest wish to quit Northover."

"Very natural that you should have been brought

quit Northover, — such a charming spot; — and so much as Mr. Rawdon has done for it, — it would have been a great thing for the Horsfords, driven as they were from Cleveland, to secure such a retreat as Northover! Mr. Horsford is fast declining; and to be near Dr. Ashe, who knows his constitution, would perhaps have set him on his legs again; and it was reasonably to be expected that Mr. Rawdon of Heckington would come forward as liberally in behalf of his father-in-law, as Lord Higham of Higham Grange.”

“He could scarcely dispose of a farm of which my father holds a lease.”

“Oh! *that* might have been arranged. Some other farm could have been substituted. Besides, as Mrs. Horsford justly says, Mr. Corbet has Grenfield House to fall back upon; to say nothing of the fine fortune his daughter has withdrawn from the family. I only repeat Mrs. Horsford’s words, my dear Miss Corbet,” added the ill-bred little gossip, when an involuntary start betrayed poor Tiny’s susceptibility to the charge. “And really *some* indulgence is due, poor woman, to her undeserved misfortunes!” —

“Neither kindness nor indulgence has been wanting; and as a counterbalance to the misfortunes you speak of, her children are happily settled in life. I find that Mr. Turberville has procured an excellent family living for Richard; and Lord Higham is about to purchase a commission for Claude.”

"Which, in Mrs. Horsford's opinion, renders Mr. Rawdon's backwardness only the more remarkable. You must admit that, Cleveland's being let, it would have been highly satisfactory to reside within distance of the place, and see what their tenants were about."

"Not to the tenants, I imagine," replied Tiny with a smile.

"I forgot that Sir Barton Frere was a friend of yours. However, even you must feel that, had Mr. Rawdon let Heckington to the Horsfords during his absence from England, he might have derived much benefit in his improvements from the taste and *savoir faire* of his mother-in-law; presiding, as she did, for so many years, over such an establishment as Cleveland's."

"While you have seen nothing beyond the petty penuriousness of Grenfield House," — though not ~~admitted~~ was so plainly implied, that Tiny could not ~~forbear~~ ~~admit~~ serving — "Mrs. Horsford could scarcely feel more interested than myself in the improvements of Heckington, — a place founded by my forefathers; where my poor mother was born and died, and where I myself saw the light."

"To be sure, your mother was born and died there, and you yourself saw the light under its roof. One is apt to forget *that*. One is so much more accustomed to connect you with Northover, and Mr. Corbet with Grenfield House! — Everything in this life is so transitory. Family seats pass out of families. ~~Through the~~

stance, are down in the 'Landed Gentry' as 'Hartlands of Shrublands,' Shrublands belonged, only a few years ago, to some people of the name of Jones! — No doubt we shall be having the Freres inserted, shortly, as the 'Freres of Clevelands.' But no! as *they* are but tenants on lease, *that* can never be. Mr. Horsford was only able to sell some sixty or seventy acres of land, which he had added to the property; — just enough to satisfy a few clamorous creditors; the original Clevelands estate being so stringently settled on his children, that it could not be sold during the minority of Dick and Claude —"

"Which will expire so soon, that Sir Barton may still make the purchase. — But you speak of *the* Freres, as if he were married?"

"I speak of *the* Freres a little prematurely; for the event, though settled, will not take place till the close of the session. Official men seem to render even their deaths and marriages subject to the decree of the Red Book."

"And may I ask the name of our new Clevelands neighbour?"

"Now, my dear, *dear* Miss Corbet — as if you did not know! — You, who are in all Lady Higham's secrets!"

"Amy has become a very bad correspondent. I seldom hear from her now."

"But this affair seems to have been settled at Higham Grange, last winter. Poor Sir Barton appears to have been vastly disappointed at not obtaining the hand of

Florence, or Caroline. As if, as Mrs. Horsford justly observes, either of those attractive girls would have married an old man like *him*!"

"A rash remark for Lord Higham's mother-in-law," observed Tiny, no little amused by Mrs. Horsford's "jaded observations."

"Lord Higham's is an exceptional case. — Lord Higham is so superior a man, and so highly connected — Whereas, this Sir Barton Frere (Mrs. Horsford tells me) is the offspring of an official inkbottle and a tank of red-tape. No one knows more of his origin, than that he was once a clerk, and is now a Privy-Counsellor."

"A rise for which he must be indebted to talent & merit —"

"Or luck!" interrupted Mrs. Hartland. "He was found useful to government at some Congress, or Signature of a Treaty; and has, from that day to this, been careful to *remain* useful to those who are useless."

"He will, at all events, be an acquisition to the neighbourhood," said Tiny, feeling bound to uphold the friend and colleague of Lord Higham.

"I am very glad to hear you say so. I'm sure it is very amiable of *you* to take his part," rejoined Mrs. Horsford's echo, evidently meaning to imply that Miss Orbell had been thrown over by the baldheaded P. O. "Mrs. Horsford seemed afraid that — But I daresay Miss Bradden Branshaw will make him an excellent wife. As he could not secure one of Lady Higham's daughters,"

seems to have been bent on obtaining one of her favourite country neighbours."

Recollecting the pains taken by Mrs. B. B. and her daughters to attract the attention of one or both of Lord Higham's London guests when the Turberville Abbey ball was impending, Miss Corbet could readily understand how the match had been accomplished. But she was forced to listen to Mrs. William Hartland's assertions that, "dear Mrs. Rawdon was overjoyed at the idea of having her charming young friend settled so near her; that it would perhaps be an inducement to hasten her return to Hertfordshire. That her daughter had secured so desirable a companion of her own age, in so dull a place as Heckington, was a *great* comfort to Mrs. Horsford."

Poor Tiny bore even this unkindest cut of all with a patient smile, fully justifying her name of Placidia; praying only that her cousin, if, on his instalment under the roof of his fathers, similarly goaded by the impertinence of his wife's family, might prove equally forbearing.

But who was to foresee or foretell the results of an union between families and natures so antagonistic, as those of Arthur Rawdon and the Horsfords! —



CHAPTER VIII.

BE the path of life rough or smooth, Tim not in his progress. The engines of steamers press-trains may be reversed; but even in the of country-neighbourhoods, the pace of Tim flagging.

Two years passed away, almost unnoticed Corbet, and reckoned by her father only by the Italian rye-grass cut, in the interim, in the of Northover, ere Rawdon of Heckington again on the soil.

But now, for a fortnight past, he had pected. He had written home from Paris, st "he should be at home in the course of the May; in order that Mrs. Rawdon's confinement take place at the Hall." Their first child, a heir, was born at Naples. He wished the sec an Englishman. It was to be called "Willi wife having prevailed upon him to christen t "Everard" after her father, whose days were r and to whom she seemed desirous of paying a pliment.

But May came and went, and no signa of dons; and though Mr. Corbet grew a littl

their want of punctuality, it was no surprise to his daughter to read in the paper, towards the end of the month, an announcement among the births of "In Curzon Street, May Fair, the lady of Arthur Rawdon, Esq., of Heckington Hall, of a daughter."

A girl! — After all, Miss Corbet could not regret that she was not to hear the name of "Willy" bandied about with careless familiarity in the Heckington establishment. On the whole, she was glad that their coming had been postponed till they could arrive safe and well, with their two little ones; Florence being probably subdued and softened by the recent peril of childbed.

She was beginning to look forward with delight to the aspect of Heckington brightened by habitation and cheerfulness. The place was looking lovely, — more so, indeed, than she had ever seen it. Though far from reconciled to the facing of Portland stone on which Mrs. Rawdon had insisted, which to Tiny's prejudiced eye appeared less in keeping with the old Jacobean structure than its former façade of discoloured brick and ivy, still, standing out against the bright verdure and richly-foliaged trees of the park, the new white mansion looked airy and inviting.

Within, all was at present in a state of confusion. Except a single morning-room and the old tapestry-chambers kept sacred to be in readiness for the family, *the apartments exhibited only their naked walls of*

white and gold, and naked oak flooring, till t cases, and crates of new furniture standing vast hall, were submitted to the fiat of the Heckington.

It was a great satisfaction to Miss Corbet had not been required to preside over the distri these treasures. Her interference would proba been productive of a thousand blunders. Suc were out of her line, and foreign to her ex Some came from Paris, — some from Italy an Even the less recondite objects furnished by Lo holsterers, were much too modern to enter notions of household furniture; whereas, when with the wand of fashion by the Florence of Cl they would subside into their destined places.

Sometimes, she felt a little uneasy at the of Arthur's innovations. The expenses he had appeared to *her* narrow experience of almost tent. But report asserted that Mr. Rawdon's rentroll exceeded seven thousand a-year; and much belied hands of the Court of Chancery k mulated for him, during their seven years' stev a sum more than sufficient to cover the expense incurred. Little Everard was not likely to be r the extravagance of his parents.

And had not even Tiny herself been guilty *their* absence, of acts of prodigality? With her sanction she had added to Northover a res

especial use; which, though it bore the name of Studio, was rather a spacious museum. At first, Mr. Corbet remonstrated against the expenditure of several hundred pounds on the property of another. But she was of age, and in possession of her fortune; nor could he deny that the money thus squandered was not only derived from the savings of a jointure furnished by Heckington, but about to be invested in a property in which she possessed an ulterior interest.

And now that all was complete, it would have been treason to object; so great was the happiness added to her life, and so charming the addition to Northover. Not that Tiny's Studio was open to visitors. But it enabled her to free the drawing-room from her easels and books; and afforded her an unassailable refuge from intrusion.

Lucretia Rawdon, doating upon her young cousin with almost more than a mother's tenderness, had insisted on endowing her with some portion of Mrs. Enmore's bequeathments; among others, with the fine library collected by her Creole husband.

"You are aware, my dear Tiny," wrote the eccentric spinster, "that I never open a book; and that if I did, I shouldn't understand it. And as you choose to bury yourself alive at Northover, you must be sadly in want of company when your father's away looking after his beasts and their oil-cake; — more especially now that Fridolin, *poor beast*, has barked his last. — So I've

placed Reginald Enmore's quartos and folios in of Pickford's van. And to make the present more able, have packed up along with them that like Richmond of Arthur Rawdon; and a pen-and-ink which poor dear Willy sent from Dresden, and I was startled to find locked up in poor Jane's bureau if all that dreary time she'd been loving her son in secret. So please to accept them, my dear a kinswoman who loves you. I would have followed by the same conveyance the glass jars of snake tipeses, and scorpions, of which poor Jane was so fond. But I recollect how much you always disliked. The moths have got to the stuffed birds, and then to the butterflies and insects (we none of us ever, Tiny!) So them, I don't propose."

(Gratefully were the gifts accepted; and it was to afford them a fitting asylum the Studio was put. In process of time, a marble bust, founded with utmost success, by Mac Dowall, on the Dresden and an able photograph, occupied a pedestal in the niches; and Miss Corbet's copy of the Hec Gainsborough, originally destined for Fredville, found a portrait of her cousin. The cheery, well-proportioned room contained, in short, all her family relics and records.

Happy and contented were the hours which its mistress passed within its walls! Though she had just completed her twenty-second year, Tiny

nough of the cares of life to know that a quiet home, surrounded by loving hearts, constitutes one of its dearest blessings. The boys were growing up all she could desire. Alfred, now fifteen, exhibited unusual promise; and the consciousness that she had fulfilled and was still fulfilling her sacred promise to their mother, satisfied her conscience and her heart.

Among the orders executed for Mr. Rawdon of Heckington during his prolonged absence, was the erection of a monument, in the parish church, to the memory of his parents; and though his cousin could not but surmise that, had he been aware of the untoward circumstances connected with their married life, he would have been less disposed to perpetuate the memory of their union, she could not but admire the filial reverence which had prompted the act.

She was sitting one afternoon in a shady nook of the Northover flower-garden, adjacent to the spot where, under the drooping branches of a fine deodara, Fridolin was interred, — a nook commanding the road leading from Heckington, — when she was startled by the sound of wheels and the sight of a carriage; a rare spectacle, just then, — for her more fashionable neighbours were lost to eyes profane amidst the smother and dust of a London season.

Unversed in the comings and goings of that Lilliputian world which, viewed through its own atmosphere, becomes *Brobdignag*, Miss Corbet had forgotten that the

same auspicious weather which brings lilacs, laburnums and horeo-cheanuts into bloom, and nightingales into song, brings also the Whitsuntide recess; when the ever-talked Houses of Parliament turn out to greet their ever-loquacious Members.

The livery of her visitors was not that of the Rawdons. But she was not sufficiently versed in the armorial bearings of the new baronet whose parents were surmised by Mrs. Horsford to be an ink-bottle and basket of red-tape, to recognise the carriage of Lady Freer.

Eagerly, however, when announced, did she welcome her. From her, she was sure of hearing of the Highams, and probably of the Rawdons.

From the moment of their instalment at Cheltenham, she had found in the metamorphosed Emilia, a pleasant and kindly neighbour; and not being one of those tedious beings who expect to find angels in their fellow mortals, she thought herself fortunate in possessing within reach a companion of her own age, familiar with scenes and persons of whom it would have been useless to talk to her father.

Sir Barton, who in private as in public life, followed like a shadow, the footsteps of Lord Higham, had trained his young wife after the system of his great-uncle. Children were wanting to perfect the domestic companionship into which the noble Secretary had enlisted his Amy. But with less plastic materials to work upon, Sir Barton had created in his wife, a

specimen of decorum. The demure Emilia was sobered into the model-wife of an official man: — early, punctual, methodical, cautious; versed in the statistics of "Who's who," — and possessing an untirable memory for the Ayes and Noes of divisions, and dates of notices of motions.

Better than all, however, and far most difficult to accomplish, he had tutored her into the difficult art of holding her tongue; and though, like an elaborately pruned plant she had forfeited something of the charm of spontaneous development, yet, where nature has been sparing of her gifts, the interposition of art is often a blessing. Lady Frere was now a quiet ladylike woman, who did credit in London society to the name she bore, and thought herself amply repaid for her painstaking self-discipline, by her acceptance in circles far above the level of Branshaw Combe.

Such was the guest whom Sophia Corbet welcomed, not into her Studio, but into her cheerful drawing-room; rejoicing to be told how well Amy was looking, and that the youngest of her four children had just been vaccinated.

"Lady Higham is very angry with you, my dear Miss Corbet," said Lady Frere, "for not coming to town. She wants so much to show you her little boy!"

"As the Rawdons were expected at Heckington," replied Tiny, "I did not wish to be out of the way in case of their arrival. After so long an absence from

England, Florence would perhaps feel a little *désorientée* alone in the country."

"Had she not been confined in town, I believe it was settled that Mr. and Mrs. Horsford should accompany her into Hertfordshire. But even when you do visit London, Lord and Lady Higham and their friends, (my husband included,) complain that you shut yourself up in Hertford Street with old Miss Rawdon, and are not to be reached without a regular siege."

"My poor cousin is reserved and eccentric. It would not please her if I received many visitors, or left her much alone. By affording me a *pied-à-terre*, she has enabled me to take lessons in oil-painting, of which I was very desirous; and I do not like to thwart her."

"You are not very fond of thwarting any one, I suspect," said Lady Frere, kindly. "The more reason that you should not disappoint poor Amy! For the last two years, she has seen very little of her sisters;—Mrs. Rawdon being abroad, and Mrs. Turberville a fixture at the Abbey; and she really longs for your company. Even Mrs. Horsford is detained from her husband's lingering decline. The poor old man has never been able to leave the small house at Torquay, which Lord Higham took for them when we engaged Devonlands."

Good news for Sophia Corbet; who had attended not a little that fatal mother-in-law's *Volubilité* at Hackington.

"The Rawdons will, I conclude, be here in a fortnight?" said she. — "They have selected a charming moment for returning to the country."

"Neither of them cares much about the country, I fancy," replied her visitor.

"But they care about home!"

"People so well off as they are, make a home wherever they go."

Poor Tiny's smile was not altogether assentient. According to *her* estimate of the world, homes were not so easily made. Especially such homes as Heckington.

"Had they been as fond of the country, as you or I," persisted Lady Frere, (though probably if her own wishes had been consulted, she never would have seen a greener tree than is produced by the Birdcage Walk, or London Squares), "they would not have loitered so long in Italy."

"Every one seems to loiter in Italy, who has a taste for fine scenery and sunshine," observed Miss Corbet, apologetically.

"They spent more than half a year in Rome," added her visitor; "and Mr. Rawdon really looks and talks like an artist. His wife wants him to cut off his beard, now that he has returned to live among civilised Christians. It certainly gives him something of a scampish air. — As I said before, quite like an artist."

Again, the smile of Tiny was dissentient. She only

hoped the offending beard might not disappear before they met; completing as it probably must, the strong resemblance borne by Arthur to his brother.

"Mr. Rawdon talked about coming down here with us, for a few days, at Whitsuntide. But his wife has been so seriously ill since her confinement, that it would not have been right for him to leave her. And the sacrifice was not needed, as they will be here so soon together."

"Certainly not till the end of the season. Parliament will scarcely be up till August, and they have their house in Curzon Street till then."

"But my cousin is not in parliament?"

"There is always a great deal going on in town as long as the Houses are sitting; and Florence, poor thing, has seen nothing of London gaieties since she married."

"And does she still care for them? — And has Arthur *learned* to care for them? — He used to dislike going out!"

"He is not fond of full-dress balls and parties; but he likes clubs, and *la vie d'artiste*."

Again was Tiny reminded of poor Willy.

"There is, in short, strong evidence, in similarity of tastes, of the consinship between you," said Lady Fane with an affable smile.

"Because I am fond of Clubs, and wear a beard," rejoined Tiny a little amused.

"Because you are so devoted to the Fine Arts. On Mr. Marsham's return from Rome, at the meeting of parliament, when I naturally inquired after the Rawdons, he told me he had seen little or nothing of your cousin; who had hired a *studio* the other side of the Tiber, a mile from his own residence, where he lived entirely among painters, and sculptors, and those kind of people."

"A new taste on the part of Arthur. His letters to us, during his absence, have been chiefly on business topics; commissions concerning Heckington, rather than an account of his own occupations. But he spoke in raptures of the beauty of his little boy."

"And with justice; — there never was a lovelier little fellow! Just his mother's delicate features and transparent complexion. Mrs. Rawdon has returned to England prettier than ever."

"I sometimes hear at Shrublands second-hand news of the Horsford family; and Mrs. Hartland told me, some time ago, that the enthusiasm excited in Italy by Mrs. Rawdon's beauty, was even exceeded by her *succès* in Paris. By her mother's account, she must have been a leading personage in Rome; — her bosom friends all Princesses, and her parties crowded with Cardinals and foreign Royalty."

"They saw a great deal of world, of all nations. English people who give dinner-parties are sure to get on. Even Mrs. Ommany of Fair Oak, (no great favourite of yours, I remember)," added Lady Frere, with a signi-

flaunt glance, "gave a ball at the *mi-carême*, last year at Naples, the list of company at which, read like the *Almanach de Saxe Gotha*."

"Why not a favourite of mine?" inquired Tiny. "And who could do otherwise than like a woman so honestly fond and proud of her children?"

"We know, at least, that you did not choose to become her daughter-in-law; for which I ought to thank you, since my sister Augusta is to be Mrs. Victor Ommany. A great happiness to my mother, my dear Miss Corbet, to have her settled so near Branshaw Combe, at Fair Oak!"

"Then I sincerely wish you joy," was Tiny's cordial reply; "for I hear from every one that Victor Ommany has softened down into a very gentlemanlike young man."

"The tone of slang which Sir Barton Frere and myself found so offensive, soon wore off on the continent. People should never judge hastily of young people. — Most of us improve by living in the world."

"In manners, certainly."

"Why even Mrs. Rawdon — you will be greatly struck by her altered air and deportment. She is now so quiet, — so conciliating, — so graceful; — and, above all, so exquisitely dressed. Her situation has hitherto prevented her entering into general society. But she used to dine with the Highams, and I persuaded her to accompany me to one of the

field's Saturday nights, where she made quite a sensation."

"I never thought her so pretty as Amy," was Tiny's candid confession.

"Her countenance used to be less pleasing, — probably because she was always uneasy at holding such a false position. But poor dear Lady Higham has so little manner, — so little conversation —"

"She is less worldly than her sister; — less eager to shine" —

"And then, she so thoroughly neglects herself. She has become a perfect dowdy. I sometimes doubt whether, before she comes out, she even looks in the glass!"

"I daresay Lord Higham finds no fault."

"His *sister* does. She was complaining to me, the other day, that poor Amy literally did nothing by way of representing her husband's family, or upholding his party. — *One* dull assembly in the course of the season! And now that Lady Brookdale's daughter is coming out, she would not be sorry to find her sister-in-law assume her proper place in society."

"Lady Brookdale thinks so much about people's 'place in society!'"

"And does not every one?" — inquired Lady Frere, with undissembled surprise.

"Every one, I suppose, who has nothing better to care about."

"But what do you consider better?" persisted the new ladyship, as if asking for information.

"If I were Lady Higham, I should probably answer 'my husband and children.' Being only poor Sophy Corbet, a farmer's daughter, I reply, 'my pigeons, my guinea-fowls, my double jessamine and new passiflora!'"

"Yes, — I remember that Lady Brookdale included you in her strictures," replied Lady Frere, good-humouredly. — "She has withdrawn the light of her countenance from her old friend, Mrs. Turberville, for keeping her pretty daughter-in-law in the country; and entertains a poor opinion of the unambitious Miss Corbet, who will not be presented. And I assure you it is not every young lady who would have declined the chaperonage she offered."

"Lady Brookdale was very kind. But she must be sadly in want of occupation, to trouble herself so much with the affairs of her acquaintance."

"Ingeniously guessed; too ingeniously guessed! — I shall begin to be afraid of you," said Lady Frere, laughing — "The truth is, that Victoria Barwell is too completely in the hands of Miss Strickney to afford her mother the usual maternal interest; and Lord Brookdale, being only an Irish peer, without material interest in public life, the moment his Waiting is over, he subsides into a non-entity. It would therefore be a great thing for his wife to have an heiress to chaperon, —"

with an opera-box. But all this time, I am forgetting the grand purport of my visit; an omission Sir a would never forgive," she exclaimed, starting up in departure. "Which day, of our Whitsun-week's days, will you and Mr. Corbet give us the pleasure of your company at dinner at Cleveland's?" —

CHAPTER IX.

Even thus prepared for further delay in the arrival of the Rawdons, Tiny could not repress her expectations; when every morning on opening her eyes she saw how bright was the weather, that, before night, Arthur would manage to run down by the train, and enjoy at least a glimpse of his beautiful Heckington.

But again and again, she was disappointed. No Arthur made his appearance; and the weather, apparently resentful of his neglects, at length changed to chilly, rainy, cloudy, — everything that was unsettled and disagreeable; till at last, under auspices so unpropitious, she ceased to wish for his arrival.

But when eventually, in a harsh north wind, the long-looked-for condescended to visit Hertfordshire, she found him nearly as ungenial as the atmosphere. — Impossible to be more changed. The accusation against him contained in his brother's death-bed letter, of being "arrogant, cold-hearted, and graceless," seemed almost justified. She saw at once that she had lost her friend.

Whether the alteration were attributable to absence, to extended experience of the world, or to the ascendancy of the Horsfords, his brief visit did not enable her to determine. That he was cold,

erved, was grievously apparent; but whether from superficial change or perversion of character, time must prove.

Already wounded in her feelings, she even imagined there was something peremptory and ungracious in his mode of alluding to all they had done for Heckington. He seemed to consider it their *duty*, — their *business*; as if Henry Corbet had been “placed there” to look after his interests. — He evidently thought, or had been taught to think, that the chief object in life of his cousin Sophia was to repay the obligations she owed the family. Placidia appeared to have glided out of his memory.

The new position in which it was his pleasure to place her, was all the more unacceptable, because his likeness to his brother had never been half so apparent. The stain of a foreign sun upon his cheek, and the picturesqueness of his flowing beard, perfected the resemblance. A trifling gesture with which, in speaking, he occasionally put back his moustache, so painfully reminded her of poor Willy, that tears would fain come into her eyes. But she would have been sorry to shed them before that careless travelled gentleman! — Open her heart to *him*? — She did not even open her Studio! — He was not worthy to share the worship of her family-treasures.

It was not till she alluded to his children, that his heart expanded. In talking of the beauty of little

Everard, his face brightened, and his voice assumed a tone of interest.

"Yes — the most beautiful little fellow in the world!" he said, in answer to her praise. "But how did you hear anything about him? — True, true — you have lately seen that model femal official which Sir Barton Frere has cut out of card-paper on the pattern of Lady Higham; who thinks it her duty to say *ditto* to every syllable uttered by Amy."

"Her admiration of your little boy seemed quite spontaneous."

"In that *clique*, nothing is spontaneous. Never has there anything more nauseously *routinier* than the whole set. — I found them revolving like squirrels in their cages, just where I left them; the same catchwords on their lips, of 'motions and amendments,' — 'majorities and minorities;' — throwing stones in each other's face in public life, and bombons in private; — heaping their tables with Blue Books in evidence of *Statenmanship*, just as my poor mother used to cover hers, in proof of Piety, with volumes stamped by the Society for the Propagation of the Gospel!"

Tiny felt vexed at this disparaging allusion to his mother. He seemed thoroughly to have abstracted himself from the family.

"You will find both Lord Higham and Sir Barton highly thought of in public life," — *said she, a little stiffly.*

"Public life!" — he retorted, shrugging his shoulders. But whether in scorn of that select department of human nature, or of her own limited insight into its opinions, it was not easy to determine.

"All sham, — all moonshine!" he peevishly added. "A chorus of ignoble voices, which, united, get up a tolerable roar; but every one of which, singly, is as weak and thready as a reed."

To what motive to ascribe this vehement outburst against the impalpable shadow of the mysterious substance we have agreed to call Government, Miss Corbet was puzzled. It seemed as vague and vapoury a diatribe as the defiance of Ajax to the Elements. Perhaps as Robert Horsford now figured as private secretary to some public man who was much too prudent not to write his own letters, *he* might be the rat behind the arras at which Mr. Rawdon was fencing.

Her father now made his appearance, after a trudge round his cornfields, with news of the coming harvest, and weather-wisdom which might have put the Greenwich Observatory to the blush; and Downing Street and Parliament were thrown into the shade. The practicality of Henry Corbet seldom glanced an inch beyond his own narrow horizon; and all he saw was consequently seen clearly. His discourse with his artist-nephew was of composts, drains, levels, and rye-grass — the only Italian production he cared to ask about; and though *Arthur at first* regarded him as an A 1 bore, by the

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time he had refreshed his inner man with a wholesome country luncheon, he became more interested in Northover, and was as much the better for his visit as one of Henry Corbet's Alderney calves for its first dog's grass.

"How deplorably that young fellow is gone off!" said Mr. Corbet to his daughter, as soon as he had taken his leave. "Scarcely the vestige of a gentleman in his appearance, — and so snarling and supercilious in his demeanour! — Never saw any one more changed for the worse."

"His foreign manners and appearance will wear down when he has been a little longer in England," pleaded Tiny.

"The sooner the better. My poor wife and I, Tiny, used to be sadly afraid you'd take a fancy to one of those Enmores, and be a miserable woman. Heaven's mercy be thanked, you never did. Marriages between cousins, though not prohibited by Scripture-warrant, are, to my notion, unnatural things."

Needless for his daughter to cite to him the opinion of Montaigne that such marriages are interdicted only because, according to St. Thomas, conjugal love, super-added to kindred love, would produce inordinate affection; which she sometimes fancied might have been the case had she become the wife of Willy Enmore. She replied only that she had never expected to find Arthur *proved* by connecting himself with the *Handfast*

"He don't seem to care a straw about Heckington! —" said the crestfallen farmer, who had expected the improvements effected by his zeal to call down thunders of applause. — "All the more extraordinary, now that he was a son to inherit the estate."

"Men of his age are so apt to take up the crotchet of the day! Scotland is just now the fashion; and Arthur appears to be wild after moors and deer-forests."

"He has engaged one, he tells me, with Charles Turberville, who is already off to the North for salmon-fishing. The old folks at the Abbey are satisfied, so they can but keep him from London and Paris. I can understand Charles Turberville wanting to get away from his mother's apron-string. But why Arthur, independent as he is, cannot settle at once under his own roof-tree, is amazing!"

"And scarcely less so, that we cannot allow him to follow the bent of his inclinations," rejoined his daughter, cheerfully. "So long as his new-fangled habits do not lead him to interfere with us, dear papa, let us leave the poor fellow to himself."

The philosophy of Placidia sustained her even under the severe gnat-biting of a visit from little Mrs. Hartland, who had of course "heard from poor dear Mrs. Horsford that much as *some* members of the family thought of Heckington, Mr. Rawdon had no idea of settling there *at present*. He had taken the prevailing epidemic —

a craze for Highland sports; and Florence, before she had half recovered her strength, was to be dragged to the North, poor darling, — perhaps to be crippled for life by riding Highland ponies and fording Highland rivers. — There was only one comfort; — and in poor Mr. Horsford's precarious state, comfort was needed. During their absence, the children and nurses were to be left at Heckington, to be within reach of that excellent Dr. Ashe; and she *did* pray and implore Mr. and Mrs. Hartland to make them her especial charge. Even the treasure of a head-nurse and the French household whom poor Flo. was so fond, could scarcely be trusted at the distance of four or five hundred miles from their employers."

This was something of a trial. If the guardianship programme should be countersigned by the Rawdens, to find the dear little Everard she had been so eager to fold in her arms, made over to the guardianship of a comparative stranger, would be a cruel probation.

That evening, she found, or fancied, her favourite piano considerably out of tune.

Before Midsummer had brought the roses into bloom and wreathed the quaint frontage of Heckington with tassels of the favourite yellow honeysuckle, she had transplanted from Grenfield House, and the white blossoms of the Macartney rose, which the importunate of Heckington had exiled from the old house, by means of judging for herself of the Rawdens' up-

Little Edgar, though his Grenfield education ought to have rendered him a more accomplished bird's-nester, had inaugurated his holidays by a fall from one of the old elm-trees; and as the injury to his knee, which Dr. Ashe at first pronounced to be slight, began to threaten permanent stiffness, his sister obtained Mr. Corbet's permission to take him to Hertford Street for a few days, for the benefit of further advice.

So overjoyed was poor Lucretia to have her idolised Tiny under her roof again, that she expressed an almost savage thankfulness for any event, even an accident, which brought her to town.

The old house was utterly and painfully unchanged. Lucretia made it a religion not to remove so much as a nail from its place, or a weather-stain from the paper. Except that every thing looked more dusty and faded than of old, and that the absence of its two sulky landlords, Harding and Parkins, imparted a sense of freedom to its inmates, all was, to a hair's-breadth and a shade, as in those happier days when, dull as it appeared to other people, to her it was Elysium.

The only thing Tiny found unaltered in which she could have desired a change, was the rough questioning of the eccentric spinster. Joan Blunt was as much as ever Joan Blunt; and went straight to the point of even the most delicate question. "Pray, what have Heckington and the Rawdons done to Rawdon of Heckington, my dear Tiny?" said she, after Miss Corbet's anxieties

on the boy's account had been appeased by the favourable decree of Brodie and Hawkins. "I find he is to spend the autumn in the Highlands: and not once since his return to England, has he condescended to set foot in my house!"

"For him, it must be replete with such painful associations —"

"Nonsense, my dear!" interrupted Lucretia. "It is full of painful associations for all of us. The world is full of them. Arthur Rawdon's not the first man who has survived his relations; though I admit that few ever behaved worse to them, while alive. Why, if people couldn't bear to enter the house where their family lived before them, half the grand mansions in the kingdom would be deserted. — No! — I'll tell you what it is. It is *snery*! It is Horsfordism grafted upon Heckingtonism. I always thought those upstarts would overlay him with their vulgar affectations. They have taught him to consider me a quizzical old snob, — and I don't resent their verdict. — But to shirk relationship, my dear Tiny, don't suffice to extinguish it."

"Arthur appears to see very little of any one just now," said Miss Corbet, deprecatingly. "I hear from Lady Frere, that Mrs. Rawdon has been in considerable danger —"

"Only the danger that attends all being-humanity. But the Horsfords never take things like that into account."

They must always be pigs with six legs, instead of four."

"I am most anxious to see little Everard —" Tiny was beginning.

"Everard? — Who's *Everard*? — What's Everard? — Old Horsford's name, I fancy —"

"After whom, Mrs. Rawdon has named her son."

"Why not after its own father? — Look at the family-tree, my dear, in the Heckington library. You'll find there every decent English name. But no Everard! — Everard's Horsford all over."

"The child who bears the name is said to be a little cherub," pleaded Miss Corbet.

"Horsford again! — *We* never were cherubs. The Rawdons are not a good-looking race, and I don't know that the admixture of Creole blood mended the Enmores. But it don't much signify. Lucifer was the most beautiful of the angels."

Without stimulating further wrath on the part of her cousin by the announcement of her project, Miss Corbet proceeded, that very afternoon, to put her doubts to the proof by a visit to Florence. The manner in which she was received would satisfy her as to the footing on which they were hereafter to stand.

It was easy to reach Curzon Street; less easy to obtain admittance. The brougham hired by Miss Corbet for her sojourn in town, was so many degrees below the *trimness and brightness* of the equipages to which Mrs.

Rawdon's servants were accustomed, that a careless "not at home" was the answer given to her simple-faced country-servant. But she was not to be so readily defeated. She was already on the doorstep.

"Should Mr. Rawdon be at home," said she, "pray tell him that Miss Corbet is here; very desirous of seeing the children before she leaves town."

The sweet ladylike self-possession of Placidia imposed upon the supercilious butler. For he instantly requested her to follow him; and having shown her into the drawing-room, proceeded a story higher, — leaving the door open, apparently while he hastened to convey her message.

A minute or two, afterwards, the steps of two persons were heard hurrying down; and Tiny, believing them to be those of Arthur and his servant, advanced to meet him.

What was her surprise, to confront upon the landing, — evidently about to pass the door, — Robert Horsford and Mr. Marsham! — Unable to avoid the meeting, they accosted her with easy courtesy.

"It was so long since they had met! — They were *delighted* to see her again, and looking so charmingly!"

"Will you not go upstairs?" added Bob, — after cordially shaking her hand. "Florence is in her dressing-room, expecting you."

Still startled, and a little confused, she complied; and on reaching the second landing, a jaunty-looking

French maid was awaiting her; holding open the door of what would have passed in Tiny's inexperienced eyes for a charming little drawing-room, had not a frilled and furbelowed toilet-table, and a gilt toilet-glass whose lace-curtains were fastened back with bows of pink ribbon, announced it to be a dressing-room. There, extended on a sofa under an embroidered muslin *couvre-lit* lined with rose colour, lay Mrs. Rawdon; attired in delicate French *peignoir* and cap as white as snow. —

For a moment, Tiny paused on the threshold. She had never seen any living being look half so pretty. — No apple-blossom could exhibit greater delicacy of tint than her complexion; and amidst the fragrance diffused by a stand of choice plants concealing the fireplace, Florence might have passed for a human flower, the chief ornament of the room.

But what certainly did not detract from her charm in the eyes of Miss Corbet, was the graciousness of her *accueil*. One of her own sisters could scarcely have been more affectionately welcomed.

“My dearest Tiny,” said she, in a soft low voice, probably the result of her recent indisposition, — “how very kind of you to come and see me after all my seeming neglect.”

And when Miss Corbet approached to take her eagerly-extended hand, she was drawn down to the sofa, and a gentle kiss imprinted on her cheek, from the

midst of those flowing draperies of perfumed lace and muslin.

"It would have been useless to come here before since you would not have been allowed to see me," replied Tiny, a little embarrassed by such warm demonstrations. "As it is, I had some difficulty in forcing my way in."

"Now that my servants know you by sight, you will never be refused. But this is my first day of being visible to eyes profane. Just before you came, my brother Robert profited by the grand event to make his appearance; and, very unceremoniously, accompanied by a friend! —" she continued, with an artless smile, — as if quite unaware that Tiny met them on the stairs. "To say the truth, their unexpected visit has a little fatigued me."

"Shall I defer mine, then, till another day?" considerately inquired Miss Corbet.

"Not on any account. Not for worlds. — Take that little footstool, Tiny, and sit here beside me; — close to the sofa, that I may not have to speak loud. — I have long been wanting to talk to you."

In an instant, Miss Corbet had obeyed orders; beginning to be as much pleased by the frank kindness of Mrs. Rawdon, as she had been previously captivated by her loveliness.

"If I could have found strength to hold a pen," resumed Florence, "I should have written what I

going to ask, — that you will do us the great favour to share with dear Amy the sponsorship of our little daughter. Mamma was Everard's godmother; and you and Lady Higham come next in our regard."

"But will not Caroline be a little jealous?" inquired Miss Corbet.

"Charles Turberville is to be godfather; and it is uncustomary for husband and wife to officiate together. Besides, I have set my heart on there being another Sophia Rawdon of Heckington."

To refuse, under such circumstances, would have been impossible; though, for a thousand reasons, compliance was unsatisfactory.

"I begged Arthur to apply to you, soon after the young lady saw the light," added Mrs. Rawdon. "But he has grown so dreadfully indolent, — (the usual result, I fancy, of a sojourn in Italy, — and even *I*, born idle, am grown ten times idler than ever!) — that there is no getting him to write a note or leave a card for me. However, since you kindly comply with our request, 'all's well that ends well.'"

"And when is the ceremony to take place?"

"As soon as I can leave this quiet sofa and snug dressing-room, and say twenty words without feeling faint," replied Mrs. Rawdon, who had now uttered twenty times twenty without exhibiting any tendency of the kind. "For it will be a fatiguing day, dear Tiny. Amy's boy is to be christened at the same time; and

Lord Higham, *qui maintient les bons vieux principes*, insists, as Sir Charles Grandison would do, on a grand christening dinner to all who have taken part in the solemnity. So get up your steam and your white satin, my dear, and help us to maintain the dignity of the family."

This was a somewhat different view of her claims to that hinted, under Mrs. Horsford's instructions, by the little lady of Shrublands; and Miss Corbet was deeply gratified.

"But may I not have a sight of my god-daughter?" said she. "And Everard. — I am so longing to see your boy! —"

"Do you think me so much my own mistress as to command my own nursery?" replied Mrs. Rawdon laughing. "My dear child, you have many delusions of spinster-life to unlearn! — However, I got rid, yesterday, of *one* of my janitresses; and if you touch yonder hand-bell *very* gently, and beg *very* hard to the consequential lady who will respond, perhaps she will allow us a glimpse of half a child. — Which will you have?"

"I am inclined to answer, like the Bishop in the story, 'Baith.' But since there *must* be a choice, let it be the boy."

"Ah! Tiny, Tiny! — Little Rawdon of Heckington carries the day with you, as with his father! —"

As the head-nurse at that moment sailed grandly in,

looking like Semiramis in dimity, Miss Corbet was spared the embarrassment of a reply.

“This lady — one of baby’s godmothers, Mrs. Milsum, wishes to see the children,” said Mrs. Rawdon, instead of listening to suggestions that it was “high time she should take a cup of arrow-root or glass of jelly, unless she wished to be worn to pieces.” And the word god-mother, suggesting visions of christening-presents and many future tips of sovereigns, produced immediate compliance.

The poor little babe was brought in, soft, helpless, unconscious, — its flowing laces and muslins rendering it quite as much a supplement to Mamma, as any affinity of flesh and blood. A quiet kiss was imprinted on its forehead by Miss Corbet, with a degree of interest arising from the relative position they were hereafter to hold.

While she was still stooping over the little callow nestling, a wrangle was heard at the door; accompanied by a roaring cry and a variety of admonitory interjections.

“*Mais voyons donc, Monsieur Evrard! Voyons donc! — Soyons sage!*” — evidently proceeding from a difference of opinion between the Heir of Heckington and his *bonne*. — Not yet two years old, and a will of his own! — The Creole blood was already unquestionably manifesting itself in “Monsieur Evrard!” —

The struggling child was at length brought in, deal-

ing on the shoulders of Adrienne such punishment as his round soft fists clenched into swansdown balls, could manage to inflict; while his mother, putting her own delicate hands to her ears to shut out his noise, laughed heartily as she pointed out to Tiny the pugnacious spirit of her new cousin.

Miss Corbet, however, was more shocked than amused. Much as she had heard of the boy's beauty, it far surpassed her expectation; and she wanted to take him in her arms, and kiss those round fair cheeks on which the tears were glittering, like, if so hackneyed a simile can be borne with, dew-drops on a peach. But even for this, she did not choose to risk being kicked or scratched.

"C'est qu'il a entendu la voix de Monsieur, et veut absolument voir son Papa," explained the *bonne*.

On which, Mrs. Milsum, the nurse, proceeded to add the young rebel had seen through the bars of the nursery-window Mr. Rawdon ride up to the door, and insisted on being taken down to him.

It further appeared that "Master," on finding a brougham at the door, and hearing there was "company" with the invalid, had ridden away again; affording every chance that Master Everard's exasperation might be indefinitely prolonged.

"Won't you kiss me, Sir, and be a good boy?" inquired Tiny, on finding the case thus desperate. But his reply was a decidedly negative shake of the head.

and an onslaught on her bonnet. As the child fixed her, however, with the glare of a tiger's whelp, something in what his uncle Willy used to call "the honest blue eyes of poor Tiny" acted like a charm on his nature. His roar was suspended. — His little claws relaxed; and a half-smile dawned upon his beautiful face as he stretched out his arms to be taken into those of Miss Corbet.

"I knew we should be friends," said she, as a voluntary kiss ratified the treaty of peace.

Both baby and *bonne* were now dismissed; and in a few minutes, the little fellow was prattling in his broken words, — half French, half English, — which Florence declared to be a *lingua Franca* interpretable only by his father.

"It would amuse you, dear Tiny," said she, "to see Arthur's manly length stretched on the ground, and his solemn face made a plaything of by that urchin, crawling over him. Impossible to say which of the two is the greater child!"

"It would do more than amuse — it would gratify me beyond measure," replied Miss Corbet, on whom the tamed tigerling was now lavishing his endearments.

"I think I shall call you the Whisperer," added Florence, after watching their good understanding. "You cannot have a better object on which to exercise your art, than Evvy, — as perfect an Enmore as a parent's heart could (*not*) wish!"

Poor Tiny's first attempts at his education were not however, so successful as they might have been: his endeavours to add the word "cousin" to the *lingua franca* of young Rawdon of Heckington, resulting only in "Tuddy;" a pet name immediately taken up and adopted by his mother.

CHAPTER X.

IN quitting Curzon Street to proceed to Lady Ham's, the mind of poor Tiny seemed confused by a flood of wonder.

She seemed to have "eaten of the insane root that the reason prisoner." — To fancy her rough, plain cousin Arthur the citizen of such a Capua, the master of such a house, the husband of such a Florence, was next to impossible.

Hitherto she had seen little of the wasteful wantonness of wealth. Higham Grange was remarkable only for its solid simplicity; and the tawdry elegance of Clevedon was considerably tarnished before she attained to a keener observation.

Mrs. Rawdon's coquettish dressing-room consequently led her first introduction to the fopperies of Parisian luxury; and the velvet-pile carpet, white, studded with gold, — the silken draperies covered with embroidered flowers, — the medallions of Rose-du-Barry porcelain adorning the furniture, — and a thousand costly trifles scattered about, astonished rather than pleased her.

"Don't fancy that I found these treasures in a ready-made house, Tiny," said Florence, noticing her surprise.

"All you see here is my own, and came from my mother's room."

Highlands? naturally suggested
who, after spending an hour
pressed by the luscious perfume
tropes, no longer wondered at
which Arthur had surveyed his
and flower-garden.

In Park Lane, her better re-
In that house, all was as of old
master and mistress. Her well-
and Lady Higham, surrounded
ditioned children, appeared to be

"How glad I am to see you
said she, after a hearty embrace
will succeed in reconciling the
sadly fear we shall be having the

Arthur is so altered, — so strange, — so morose. — It makes me miserable to think of him."

At that moment, there passed before the eyes of Sophia Corbet the vision of an afflicting deathbed; and the prediction of her poor stepmother, that the wife of either of Reginald Enmore's sons would have a terrible destiny, seemed again whispered in her ears.

"Arthur possesses all this world can afford to make life enjoyable," added Amy, after vainly waiting for a rejoinder. "But he seems to take no pleasure in anything. — Did you ever see a lovelier child than little Everard?"

"I hope to see many more docile," replied Miss Corbet, — "among others, a certain Honourable James Armstead —"

"Who does not number as many weeks, as Rawdon of Heckington, months," rejoined Lady Higham. — And, as if to avoid further discussion of the nursery legislation of her sister, she began to talk of the approaching ceremony in which "Tuddy" was to take so prominent a part.

"Lord and Lady Brookdale are to be sponsors for little James," said she; "and Victoria Barnwell is to be introduced on this occasion. Her mother has therefore made it a great point with us to get up a brilliant party for her. You, my dear little bridesmaid, ought to be with one of us at this family gathering."

Cheered by the influence of so much kindness, and

becoming gradually Londonised, Miss Corbet began to look forward with pleasure to the engagement; more particularly as Lady Higham who, since her happy marriage, had become far more catholic in her views than was compatible with the contracted circle of Cleveland, empowered her to extend the invitation to her cousin Lucretia. Not that Tiny was desirous to have the old lady appear where she would be so thoroughly out of place. But she knew that what a late American minister's wife used to call "the power of declension," would be highly gratifying to her feelings.

Still more gratifying, however, was it to Lucretia Rawdon that, the christening being fixed for the following week, she was thus assured of the prolongation of Tiny's visit; as the rapid amendment of little Edgar, under improved management, would otherwise have carried her back to her flower-beds and guinea-chicks. It was a delight to the fussy spinster to have so beautiful a specimen of the Rawdon race, and so kindly a specimen of human nature, under her roof, bringing sunshine into the old house and warmth into her old heart; and while Tiny enjoyed herself with her friends in Park Lane, she desired no better than to escort the infirm Etonian to panoramas and dioramas, or listen with childish glee as genuine as his own, to the clever monologues of Pricilla Horton and Albert Smith.

No sooner did the news transpire of Miss Corbet's installation in town, in that F. O.

Marshall was the Buckingham and Bob Horsford the Rochester, than the Freres insisted on being dined with. Nor was Tiny so superior to the frailties of her sex as to be without curiosity concerning the home and mode of life which, at a period when every offer was disinterested, had been tendered to her acceptance.

The party invited to meet her would have been more acceptable, perhaps, had the said Rochester and Buckingham been omitted. — But Lady Frere indulged in the amiable delusion that Miss Corbet would prefer familiar faces to those of strangers; a supposition not always valid, as regards old friends, — seldom as regards old acquaintance; — to break new ground in the human desert, presenting an alternative far more exciting.

But the five other guests invited to complete the ten methodically assigned by Sir Barton to his well-studied round table, were more elaborately selected: — the “Progress” Lord Ackerdoye, aspiring to the renown of philosophical statesmanship, with the beautiful wife who sweetened his bitter green tea; — the clever dowager, lady Wrexham, who had seen, heard, and read every thing worth seeing, hearing, and reading, for the last forty years, yet contrived to enliven the ears of other people with original matter; — Victor Ommany, over whose social education his future brother-in-law was prudently presiding; and a tall thin individual who, when *his back was turned*, every body called “Sir Index,” but

who was formally presented to Miss Corbet by the name of "Sir Justin Roche."

The house of the new under-secretary was of moderate size, but so judiciously arranged as to double its actual dimensions. Every chair was placed where it was pleasantest to sit in, every book where it came easiest to hand, every *portière* hung where it excluded a draught and every curtain where it accommodated itself best to the light.

The dinner was served *à la Russe*; the attendants being so well disciplined, and the whole service so carefully rehearsed, that had a spoon or glass been heard to jingle, or a guest been seen waiting for a sauce, an immediate change of administration would have been the result.

For the Red-tapist carried out in domestic life the system of routine which had, by slow progression, converted his own non-entityism, into substantiality. Every thing in his establishment moved in a groove. From Lady Frere down to the under-footman and the overstand, all was regulated by clock-work.

As an old acquaintance of Miss Corbet, the Red-tapist attached himself to her side, while the party was assembling before dinner; and, as if expressly to remind her of former times, was careful to sprinkle vitriolic dew over every new-comer.

"You don't know Sir Index, I fancy?" said he in a low aside. "Sir Index is new."

and a very successful novelty! — Some people get on in life by making one speech, like that impostor Single-Speech Hamilton. — Others, by writing one book, like that impostor, — no matter whom. Others, a pamphlet, like that other impostor, George Marsham, Esquire. But Sir Index Roche gets on by having interleaved Dod's Peerage, Baronetage, and Knightage with original notes; recording every-body-worth-knowing's cousinships and *liaisons*; so that when a colonial bishop is promoted, or a Sir Barton Frere pitchforked into the Privy Council, he has only to turn to his pet volume, in order to class him as accurately as Linnæus."

"But how can *that* tend to his advancement in life?"

"How does it tend to the advancement of a rifleman to be a good shot? Sir Index knows better than any of us

• 'To whom to bow, — whom take into his coach.'

He is asked every where, as a sort of Companion to the Almanack. When any one of note dies, he instructs the Obituarist of the Illustrated News where and when he was born, and who was his great-grandmother; small facts, which the gaping and much-be-bored public swallows with the utmost appetite, but which you, my dear Miss Corbet, who, I perceive, are deficient in the boss of Eventuality, care no more about than for the pedigree of

----- " "

Recalling to mind the false witness she had formerly heard borne by Mr. Marsham against the Turberville family, Tiny accorded little faith to his testimony.

A moment afterwards, he was down upon Lord and Lady Ackerdoyle.

"Ack. is a mite seen through a microscope!" said he with an indulgent smile; "the prize-bantam of the political poultry-show, who fancies himself under the necessity of crowing pianissimo, lest his clarion should rattle down St. Paul's. It is quite refreshing to hear him apologise for his marriage, — as a boyish weakness — his own one, — of which he is a little ashamed. Whereas, if he did but know it, people tolerate his heavy load for the sake of its pretty frontispiece; and regard the charming wife of his, as poor Ackerdoyle's Grace before meat."

As the arrangement of the guests at dinner left Mr. Corbet, as the unmarried lady of the party, to the care of Bob Horsford, George Marsham, or Victor Osmund, it was a relief when Lady Frere, who lost no opportunity of putting forward her future brother-in-law, assigned her to the care of the latter; more especially as her neighbour on the other side was Sir Justin Roche, concerning whom her curiosity was slightly awakened.

"I am delighted to hear that you will be present at the Park Lane christening," said the young gentleman with an air of gentlemanlike deference.

from his pert familiarity of former years, "It is to be a very brilliant affair."

"To me, it will of course appear so," she replied. "The eyes of a country cousin are easily dazzled."

"The Highams are so popular, — Lady Higham so much liked, her husband so much respected, — that any party of theirs must be a success. But *you* must feel a double interest in the event, — you, who, as of Rawdon descent, are almost one of the family."

"Of Rawdon descent?" reiterated Sir Justin Roche, liming in, and addressing himself to Miss Corbet; — "On the paternal or maternal side?"

"My mother was a Rawdon," she replied, amused to find him parade his foible on such slight provocation.

"An ancient and substantial family, the Rawdons; holding lands in Hertfordshire from the time of Henry the Sixth. Obtained the Manor of Heckington in the seventh of Elizabeth, — repeatedly Knights of the Shire. Supposed to have refused a peerage from Sir Robert Walpole. Much to be lamented that the late and present representatives of the race have exhibited no interest in public life."

"My cousin is still so young," — Tiny was beginning. But Sir Justin was there to talk, not to listen.

"Old enough to show pretty plainly the bent of his inclinations. Absorbed in tobacco and aesthetics, — the one of the rising intellect of Britain: a modern disease, like the potatoe blight, or diphtherite. Before a lad leaves

Eton, one may guess, with tolerable accuracy, whether he be likely to embark in politics."

"Are we to infer, Sir Justin, that you foresaw in my friend Marsham here the Junius of the century, on that never-to-be-forgotten fourth of June, when you picked me up under the table at Serly Hall, and carried me off to a tent; endeavouring to sing 'Floreat Etona' to the tune of 'Rule Britannia,' after a fifth bumper of champagne?"

"My acquaintance with Marsham commenced more decently," retorted Sir Justin, who hated to be catechised. "Some years before you and young Rawdon of Heckington attempted to commit suicide with Windsor champagne, I had the pleasure of hearing him recite his prize poem at Cambridge. You remember," he continued, trying to catch the ear of the pamphleteer, who was conversing with Lady Ackerdoyle, in whispers which he endeavoured to render compromising, though they regarded only the age of a thorough-bred mare of which she was negotiating the purchase. "I can't precisely date the year; but it was the term that young Huntsmore, the Duke of Lancashire's son, took his double first, and broke his collar-bone with the harriers."

By this time, Sophia Corbet was engaged with Captain Ommany in the discussion of old times at Higham Grange.

"I remember with gratitude how patient you were with me in my whelphood,"

Highams, their kindness both there and in town, has been everything to me. Our whole neighbourhood rejoices at their new honours, and the birth of the heir who is to represent them."

"Their whole neighbourhood, perhaps; but I suspect not their whole family," again interposed Sir Index. "It was always set down as one of Brookdale's judicious specs, that he married the only sister of a confirmed old bachelor in the enjoyment of a splendid property, and what Sir James Armstead meant by marrying, a dozen years afterwards, without asking the consent or blessing of his brother-in-law, I presume Lady Higham's pretty face can explain. However, it don't much matter, — that is, it oughtn't to matter. That only daughter of the Brookdales will eventually come into a handsome fortune. Though something under five thousand a-year is a poor pittance for even an Irish peer, it will be no bad inheritance for Miss Barnewall."

"'Hear it ye senates (and senators), hear this truth sublime,'

exclaimed Bob Horsford, who had been a careful auditor of the holding-forth of Sir Justin. "Hear it, O Marsham, M.P.! who keep a bye-kalendar of heiresses. Poor little frost-bitten Victoria Barnewall is a *parti* after all!" —

But Mr. Marsham heard not a syllable.

Close at the ear of Eve, — familiar toad,

he turned a deaf ear to the invocation.

Miss Corbet's attention meanwhile was abstracted

from the fencing bout between Bob and the Frenchman, by the peculiarly agreeable manner in which Sir Barton did the honours of his house. Unabsorbed by the clock-duty of presiding over the turbot, saddle of mutton & haunch of venison, and tough peafowl, he was able to give his undivided attention to the well-bred, elegant and fascinating Lady Ackerdoyle; to send round the conversation, being now as much the business of the master of the house, as, in the more bibulous days of English life, to send round the wine.

To her, how little seemed to intervene between the first Sunday dinner in Park Lane, when Amy, as a bride, had voted her husband's bald-head colleague insupportable, and the present moment, when Sir Barton was standing in that husband's official shoes, established as one of the most attractive members of London Society. Her own ascent by an equally rapid evolution of the wheel of fortune, from the humble bridesmaid of Cleveland into the rich and beautiful Miss Corbet, seemed to escape her memory.

He was listening with every semblance of interest to some marvellous feats related by the dowager of the American horse-tamer.

"I fully agree with your ladyship," said he, "in applauding any discovery which enables us to employ milder means in subduing ferocious instincts. But why waste it upon quadrupeds, when so many dangerous specimens of human brutality remain to be tamed?"

"The horse-tamer will perhaps try his hand on his fellow-creatures, when he has brought the stable to reason," said Bob Horsford. "Who knows but, in time, he may be allowed to experimentalise on the Cabinet or the Bench of Bishops? — Lord-taming would be rare sport for a Yankee!"

"But why misdoubt an invention because it reaches us from West to East?" observed Lord Ackerdoyle. "The tides of civilisation are evidently beginning to flow in that direction."

"We have so long been accustomed to regard our Transatlantic friends as able getters-up of Popular Delusions —" Sir Barton was beginning.

But Bob Horsford unceremoniously broke in with —

"All Barnum — all Barnum! — I wouldn't embark in their clipper-yacht, for the chance of bringing home the Golden Fleece. I doubt if I should even fancy myself dead, if shot through the head with one of Colt's Revolvers!"

"Yet they are warranted to penetrate the thickest deal board," added Marsham, coolly.

"I am afraid we are a little too apt to bite our thumb at Brother Jonathan," observed Lady Wrexham, hoping that no one but herself had overheard this ill-bred personality. "We should not betray jealousy of the triumphs of our Ishmael. When it was reported, many years ago, that Charles Dickens was going to *America to study character* — 'Why give himself the

trouble?" said my friend Lady Holland. "If he went to see *vulgar* people, let him try the second-rate society of our manufacturing towns." — Longfellow, Prescott, Emerson, Hawthorne, and the grandest scenery in the world, were not accepted as extenuating circumstances."

"I entertain no doubt," broke in Lord Ackersley, seizing the first opportunity that presented itself for a prosification, "that, seven centuries ago, the Orientals denounced the invading Crusaders who poured in upon them from the West, as equally '*vulgar*.' — And *vulgar* they certainly were, if ignorance of the arts of civilisation constitute vulgarity. A Norman Baron was a coarse freebooter, — a Saxon Thane, a savage: gross in their habits, — ruffianly in their morality. Even the pearl of chivalry, Cœur de Lion, the darling of poets and sculptors, when he stole the falcon from the poor Sicilian peasant, and knocked him down for resisting, was little better than the drunken gaffer of '*vulgar*' Yankee."

"'Tis distance lends enchantment to the view.'"

"Vulgar is not only so arbitrary but so *vulgar* an epithet," observed Sir Barton, "that even to apply it is vulgarising."

"Yet how potent are its effects," rejoined the p-dantic young lord, "in the hands of some noted critic, intent upon burking the aspiring genius of a young actor; or of some crack speaker, resolved to squelch a new member; or even some jealous champion, to

crush a promising débutante! — How many reputations have been prematurely blighted by that miserable word! — Byron stigmatised Keats as vulgar, — little suspecting that, before a quarter of a century elapsed, *his* lyrics would be recognised as among the most refined of his day. Nay, a popular publisher once inveighed to me against the vulgarity of Sir Edward Lytton's quaint title for his romantic comedy of 'The Sea Captain,' which he thought might be advantageously changed to 'The Naval Officer!' "

"Superciliousness and affectation are among the worst phases of vulgarity," rejoined Sir Barton. But in order to put a full stop to such very heavy criticism, some fine old Hock was judiciously brought round, which rendered the conversation general.

People usually *tried* to render it general when Lord Ackerdoyle was at table: — his prize essays, without the power of "skipping," being rather a formidable specimen of table-talk.

CHAPTER XI

LUCRETIA RAWDON fully justified Miss Corbet's reliance on her good sense, by declining to join the christening party. But she was not the less interested in her young cousin's preparations; and insisted not only on the most appropriate dress that Gladman could supply; but that the late Mrs. Corbet's jewels should be sent for from Northover, and placed in order for the occasion.

When therefore poor Tiny, who had been a little overcome by the church service of the morning, (to the serious responsibilities of which she alone, perhaps, of the large party congregated on the occasion, lent an anxious ear,) surveyed the preparations for her evening toilet, she felt almost as much overpowered by the pomp and vanities she was about to assume, as by those she had that morning renounced.

She had been not a little amused, some days before, by the indignation with which Lady Brookdale resented her brother's supineness in not having secured a bishop to officiate at the christening of the future Lord Higham. Even Mr. Rawdon seemed indifferent to the texture of the sleeve which was to support the infant head of his little Sophia. "At least, it ought to be

Reverend Timothy Snooks, domestic chaplain to the Right Honourable Lord Higham!" Instead of which, both fathers considered the curate of the parish a fitting officiator; and the service was consequently well read, and free from those blunders which occasionally occur when very venerable members of the hierarchy, long disused to professional duty, turn to the wrong page, and attempt to bury, church, or marry, some hapless babe as yet unchristianised; like the honey-combed gun of a government-battery, which, when put in requisition for a royal salute, explodes at the wrong extremity.

But all her gravity gave way under the pertinacity with which poor old Lucretia insisted that Sophia Corbet, the daughter of Sophia Rawdon, must do credit to the new Sophia engrafted on the family.

"There! — Now you look something like! I only wish your poor old grand-mother could see you, my dear!" said she, when Tiny, adorned with her beautiful pearls, and magnificent bouquet and bracelet clasps of brilliants, was submitted to her inspection. "One seldom sees such pearls now-a-days; — been in the family since the days of George the First, when Lady Araminta Rawdon brought them with her as part of her dowry — (her father, you know, was Governor-General!) The stomacher was set in Paris, by that famous jeweller whom Madame de Pompadour brought into vogue, — for *your grand-aunt Sophia*, your mother's godmother; and I

necessitate the display," argued
is the first occasion, and may ve
which I shall require them ere I
god-daughter."

Had poor old Lucretia witne
in Park Lane by the splendour
would have been more than satis

The Rawdons of Heckington
brilliantly represented than by Fl
Tiny carried the day. Mrs. Rav
been seen before, — *often* before
such beauty, the avidity of the
and of the public tongue for some
about, assigned every advantage
Corbet, the great West Indian he

Not a word more

rowded the ministerial *soirée*, could not quite reconcile themselves to such costly jewels worn by an unmarried girl. But the evidence of great wealth usually carries its own apology; and even the objection raised against Placidia's gentle face by certain full-blown London belles, of being "too pale and statue-like," was invalidated before the evening was over, by the bloom raised upon her cheek partly by the heat and overrightness of the room, but still more by finding herself an object of universal attention.

Yet in her own cool quiet room, long after Lucretia Lawdon, with her curiosity satisfied by ample details of the *fête*, had left her to the repose she much needed, the blush upon her cheek remained unabated.

It was not, however, altogether indicative of pleasant motions. Her eye had been dazzled, her ear gratified; but her heart waxed sore within her. Not even on that memorable day when she returned to Grenfield House from the brilliant wedding of Amy Horsford, had she felt more deplorably forlorn than on the present occasion. At the Cleveland's ball, she had been a stranger among strangers. Now, she felt a stranger among those with whom she ought to have been heart in heart.

Not a syllable had Arthur deigned to address her, either during the morning's celebration and breakfast, or the ostentatious dinner and evening parade. — He had seen her present his infant at the font; tears of heartfelt emotion falling on its gorgeous robe as she accepted the

— Yet not once had he come to her with kindness or encouragement, to cheer her with refreshment, or the ordinary cordials of regard.

She had observed him closely, and the fortunate attention of which she was deprived from others, she had not overlooked in little Sophia. But though apprehensive of the power of her own heart, she was not prepared for the submission with which Arthur submitted to the influence of his wife. He seldom spoke to her face. Move where she might, he was the idolatry of a devotee. Not with a religion which distils balm on the soul.

There he stood, throughout the evening; his eyes fixed upon Florence: — neglecting his friends — neglecting his acquaintance — neglecting the common urbanities of society.

Tiny was not one of those who decry the influence of personal beauty. She understood that, at first sight, a man might be enthralled by the expression of a sweet countenance or the tints of an exquisite complexion. But that after more than two years of married life, a woman of shallow heart and narrow understanding should retain her power over another by mere force of external charms, — even to the point of rendering him insensible to the claims of kindred blood, of human friendship, of worldly demands on his attention, — afforded her an unexpected insight into human weakness.

Poor Tiny! — who fancied she saw so far — yet was blind to what was passing within reach of her hand! —

Of human passion and its pleadings, she had some experience; but its nature was of the mildest. The prudent secretary who now officiated so admirably at his own dinner-table, had been far from an impetuous Romeo; and neither the insidious whispers of George Marsham, nor the insect-like buzz of little Ommany, had inspired her with much respect for courtship. Her reputed wealth had of late brought to her feet suitors of any thing but *chivalrous bearing*; and her nearest cognisance of the *demonstrations* of genuine attachment consisted in the

deusqueries of poor Willy. For this she was beginning to blame and mistrust her own attractions.

As she laid aside the glittering baubles which had attracted so much jealousy, and glanced at the reflection in the glass of the sad face which, she fancied, had derived its sole charm from their brilliancy, she thought that *she* should never be loved as Florence was loved, — absorbingly, — blindly, — passionately, — brought tears into her eyes.

In those fascinations which confer the power of attracting, she must unquestionably be deficient. Her reserve, — some people called it pride — chilled perhaps the sympathies of her fellow-creatures. But for that, poor Willy would have overlooked imaginary obstacles of his own creation; and instead of flying to Jamaica, to sacrifice his life and render her rich and wretched, would have made her his wife; living to worship her, as his sister-in-law was now worshipped.

One circumstance alone, in the course of the evening, had afforded her a moment's pleasure. Lady Higham had found an interval in her attendance upon Royal Highnesses, and curtsies to guests of high degree, to whisper her regret at finding her dear Tiny persist in leaving town the following day.

"I shall soon be alone here," said she. "Next week, Florence and her husband start for Crispington."

"So soon?"

"The salmon-fishers call it late. But I have promised, when the children are at Heckington, to run down by the train some Wednesday; when, if there is no Cabinet, Higham can accompany me, and see what you are all about. — It affords the greatest comfort to Arthur and Florence that you are likely to spend the remainder of the summer at home; and that the little ones will be safe under your protection."

Too pleased was Tiny at the prospect, to resent the haughty recklessness which prevented the Rawdons from expressing this feeling to herself. It was enough that the handsome young rebel and his sister were to be her charge. Evvy would afford her constant excitement; her soft little goddaughter, a daily solace.

It was perhaps the smile which stole over her features as she listened to the announcement, which encouraged Robert Horsford, on whose arm she was leaning on her way from the tea-room, to believe that his exaggerated compliments were making a favourable impression; for that she had not heard a word he was whispering, would have appeared incredible to so consummate an egotist.

Before she retired to rest, poor Tiny, no longer Placidia, had made up her mind to visit Curzon Street before she quitted town the following day; and obtain from the lips of Florence, instructions concerning the management of those dear children. But when the *mor-*
row came, the cold dew of morning reflection hung

eyes of Mrs. Rawdon fixed with
upon her, the night before,
menace. Florence perhaps ima-
and pearls she was wearing, for
inheritance, alienated from the
though Tiny in reality cared not
poor Mrs. Enmore's jars of pickles
but perceive that others coveted
coveting.

She found no courage there
Curzon Street. "Yarrow" remained
left London with her mind clouded
Hartland of Shrublands might, be-
tween her and the darlings on
intent, — the last Rawdons and

Edgar will do the honours of his rabbits and carrier-pigeons to you, in return for all the London pleasures you have procured him."

It was lucky that the proposal did not square with the old spinster's plans. For she would have been sure not only to discover that there was a worm in the bud of Tiny's happiness; but, with the coolness and precision of a surgeon, cut straight to the source of the evil. And what would not poor Tiny have suffered, if, when Arthur brought down the children and nurses to establish them at Heckington, Lucretia had accosted him with reproaches for his capricious coldness to his cousin! —

As it was, Nature, left to her own impulses, negotiated between them with more delicacy. — On the eve of parting with that little Evvy who clung to him with all the fondness of a nature impetuous as his own, Arthur's heart was softened. The carriage that brought them down, stopped at Northover before they proceeded to the Hall; and both children and nurses were placed, with almost solemn formality, under the authority of Miss Corbet.

"You will be a mother to them during our absence, dear Tiny?" said he, in a voice tremulous with tears. "I do not make it a request; — for I know — I *feel* — that you love them!"

More by looks and gestures than by words, was the charge accepted; and Mrs. Milsum, though somewhat *disposed to resent* the insult of being placed under the

control of "a young lady which couldn't know nothing in the wide world about the management of children," too well understood the "promptory nature" of her Creole master, to gainsay the smallest of his decrees.

Still, as no movement had been made by Florence to signify her acquiescence, Miss Corbet judged it better to write and inquire her wishes concerning the arrangements of her nurses and children. She even asked whether it would be more satisfactory to their mother to have them established at Northover, than at the Hall?

"Do what you like with them, my dearest Tiny, — for all you do is judicious," wrote Mrs. Rawdon in reply. "Arthur will be far better satisfied with whatever arrangements you suggest, than if I interfered."

Then followed a string of fulsome compliments concerning the sensation produced in London by her momentary appearance; and the number of victims she had left behind, — "including her poor brother Bob and Sir Justin Roche, — the latter of whom, indeed, had become so disordered in his memory, that at the Highams' last dinner, he had confounded the date of the Lord Chancellor's birth with that of Her Majesty's marriage! — In short, my dear," she added, "that touch-and-go visit of yours has slain tens of thousands. I only wish you would accompany us to the Highlands, and supply an antidote to the miserable lethargy into which, alas! I am about to fall."

There was so much of Cleveland's levity and Hum-

ford flattery in the remaining page of the letter, as almost to neutralise the pleasure arising from its contents. But what did it matter? Those darlings were safe at the Hall, under her exclusive guardianship; and for three months to come, there would be no obstacle to her enjoyment.

That Alfred and Edgar had returned to Eton, the latter perfectly recovered, left her to the unmolested enjoyment of little Everard's ecstasies at first sight of the country; and able to act as mediator in his ever-recurring skirmishes with Mademoiselle Adrienne.

Poor Mr. Corbet, who had been blessed with good-tempered offspring, and to whom the sight of a thoroughly spoiled child was a novelty, could not forbear prescribing a little birch as an alterative for the turbulence of young "Rawdon of Heckington;" in whose idiosyncrasy he professed to discern a preponderating share of Reginald Enmore's.

Before a week was over, however, when he saw those dimpled arms clinging round the neck of "Tuddy," and witnessed the pleasure taken by his daughter in the passionate fondness of the child, he began to feel almost as lenient, and quite as proud of the little rebel as if it had been her own.

CHAPTER XII

HAD Placidia been the woman to be more slighted or devalued by her country neighbor might have been amused by the altered tone of William Hartland of Shrublands, after her visit.

Mrs. Horsford, on learning from her daughter that Bob could talk of nothing but the heiress, was determined to make court to her at second-hand. Aware that her remarks were conveyed to Northover by her Echo, she was careful to acquaint Mrs. Hartland that their dear Sophia Corbet had turned every head in the parish — including those of Mr. Marsham and Mr. Robert: and warmly express her gratification that dear grand-children were remitted to her value.

The lady whose chief avocation in life was to pick up Mrs. Horsford's "unconsidered trifles," was thrown into such a perplexity of admiration concerning the christening dress worn by Miss Corbet, which had bewitched May Fair, and the children dear to her, who had bewitched Miss Corbet, that Tiny, to gratify the vulgar curiosity of her visitor by a display of her diamonds, and still more unwilling to impede the pedantry of exclaiming *Cornelia-wisæ*, while she was the offspring of another — "these are my jewels."

scrupled to bring forward the noble boy who, if still shy, was no longer uproarious; or the lovely babe whose violet eyes already promised to rival those of Florence.

"Very strange — that she should not have been called Florence, after her mamma," said Mrs. Hartland, though the portly nurse, Mrs. Milsum, was still in the room.

"People become attached to family names," replied Miss Corbet. "There have been several generations of Sophia Rawdons. Our grand-mother, and my mother, were both 'Sophias.' My cousin's next little girl will probably be a Jane, after poor Mrs. Enmore."

"I heard my missus say, ma'am, that if ever she *should* have another, she should be called Amy," said Mrs. Milsum, delighted to show herself better informed than the young lady of Northover.

"A charming name — and not the less so from bringing to mind a very charming person," observed Mrs. Hartland, who had been examining the baby as curiously through an eye-glass, as she would have done an ichneumon fly. "I am so glad to find that Lady Higham is coming down next week, for a flying visit of inspection!"

But *this* time, the better information lay with Tiny. Lady Higham was confined to her house, under the utmost uneasiness: the scarletina having broken out in her nursery. She was in fact in a state of quarantine; *Victoria Barnwall* never having had the disorder.

Poor Lady Higham was wretched. The Rawdons were at Craighdonnon; nor could even Tiny be asked to share her maternal cares, from respect to the new duties she had undertaken.

"Lady Higham is truly to be pitied," observed Mrs Corbet. "A more anxious mother never lived, and she has persuaded herself that she shall lose at least one of her little sufferers."

"But there is no chance, I trust, of such a calamity!"

"On the contrary, Lord Higham wrote me ~~last~~ ^{the} morning that they were progressing most satisfactorily through the disorder. The real sufferer was his distracted wife."

Welcome, however disastrous, was the misfortune which authorised Mrs. Hartland to sit down and address to her dear friend a letter of condolence; and between her "enchantment" at being able to certify the prosperity of the nursery at Heckington, — and her "despair" at having learned the afflicting state of the nursery in Park Lane, her usually vapid communication was singularly *accidentée*.

When, shortly afterwards, the close of the season brought down the Freres to Cleveland, they supplied a pleasant supplement to the society of the neighbourhood. From Northover, Cleveland lay at a pleasant distance within easy reach, yet not so near as to render it a resource for rainy days; and Sir Barton, though fond of surrounding himself in the country with the

colleagues and intellectual associates who replaced in his case the collaterals which the despatch-box and bank of red-tape failed to supply, had recourse to Henry Corbet for those practical instructions in which he was as deficient as in uncles and cousins, and by which he hoped to convert into Diggings the small estate of Cleveland.

It was a comfort to Tiny to see her father associating with one by whom his useful knowledge was valued as it deserved, and over whom it gave him an advantage. But for Henry Corbet's interpretation, the farm-books of poor Sir Barton would have puzzled the solemn sec. quite as much as his own Blue Books might have puzzled the yeoman's son.

Still, in spite of his pains-taking, Downing Street stuck to the official man. His shooting jacket always seemed too tight in the arm-holes, — his wide-awake, as if it had figured the preceding day in Melton's window; and he was as little at his ease in Knickerbockers or hobnailed shoes, as Corbet in straps and varnished boots: — he walked about his farm with a fastidious, pick-my-way air, which would have afforded a good study to Leech. The P. C. was not to the manor born; but enacted the part of Farmer Arable, as he would have assumed that of a man in buckram, or lord in velvet, at some royal fancy ball.

With the devout faith in his infallibility which becomes all good wives, Lady Frere regarded him, however,

as a Coke of Norfolk; and contemplated the points he noted in his sheet-cows as admiringly as if they had been bits of Dresden china; and the sleekness of his oxen, as daintily as if they were fed with cake from Gunter's instead of the oil-mill. When the farmer of Northover broke in with his matter-of-fact notions about guano and top-dressings, she listened as Miranda may have listened to the rough jargon of Caliban.

But while her father was speaking oracles to the dilettante agriculturist, Tiny was hearing from Bob Howford glad tidings of the convalescent nursery transferred from Park Lane to St. Leonards; and from Mr. Marsham pleasant news of the sportsmen in the North. Charles Turberville, it appeared, was a better correspondent than is usually the case with a crack shot; — the grouse served daily on the Cleveland table being by no means the only good things that reached it from Craigdonnon. The joyous Charley described the whole undertaking as eminently successful. Half the party, which was twice as large as they had expected, was billeted off in bothies. Provisions had fallen short, — gillies were knocked up, and ponies as hard to come by as high-mettled racers — newspapers were becoming mythical, — the post was an accidental institution. To the question, "Staid Scotland where it did?" the Craigdonnonians were able to return an answer; but concerning the position of London or Paris, they were doubtful. All the untowardnesses, in short, which seem to land not to the

of Highland-scenery and the adventures of Highland-sport, were in full bloom and bearing.

“And Florence, — has she quite recovered her strength, in this rough mode of living?” inquired Miss Corbet, unconscious that the picturesque sketch of Craigdonnon afforded by the Pamphleteer omitted only its French cook, iced champagne, pony phaetons, and heaps of new novels and periodicals.

“My cousin supplies an accurate game-list of killed and wounded,” replied Marsham. “But he is not the man to trouble himself with the small health of his sister-in-law — or even wife. The true Great British sportsman, my dear Miss Corbet, is ruthless as a Scandinavian! — Charley sends me the weight of his salmon, and sum total of his ptarmighan. If Mrs. Rawdon had breathed her last — dead of the smell of whiskey-toddy, or of lying in the damp heather to watch for deer, — he would only have mentioned it, because the funeral ceremony must have cost him a day’s sport.”

“Will the Rawdons be home soon, do you think?” she inquired, anxiously, — less from impatience of their absence, than dread of their return, when “her children” must be given up, — though even Evvy was beginning to call the little sister, whom he saw so often in her arms, “Tuddy’s baby.”

“Probably not till the beginning of winter,” he replied; “and even then, they may be further delayed by being ‘sawed oop’ at Craigdonnon.”

“*Consolez vous!* — She , perhaps too much, — before a rejoinder. “*These Rawdons are predecessors. — These Rawdons for whom the halls of their ancestors are much charm, unless filled with creatures as they can conveniently prefer those wildernesses of brick — And who, except a fox-hunter of the field,) could prefer the landscape in family mourning, brilliant, animated, humanised*”

“As I am myself as great as you or the Rawdons to a town of words to argue the point,” re

Europe is endeavouring to undermine her principles in the most corrupt of languages!"

And amid the general laughter and confusion that ensued, the party broke up. Shortly afterwards, as they were driving together in the pony phaeton, Miss Corbet could not forbear expressing to the prim Emilia her wonder that Sir Barton, so methodical and so matter-of-fact, could endure the vapouring of Robert Horsford or the more polished *persiflage* of Marsham.

"He must see so much of them in town, that I cannot understand his courting their society in the country!"

"Habit is everything. Officials get used to their colleagues. Mr. Marsham is to Sir Barton what, twenty years ago, Sir Barton was to Sir James Armstead; and I suppose he remembers how pleasant he used to find it, when off duty, to be invited to Higham Grange."

Placidia's mind was enlightened. In this, as in all else, Sir Barton was aping the model on which he had formed himself. He wished the factious Pamphleteer and fashionable Gazetteer to be able to say of him, as he had formerly said of the head of his department —

"See him I do, — and in the happier hour
Of social freedom, ill-exchanged for power."

The despatch-boxes brought down every Saturday night by the young aspirants for Right Honourableness, are in fact only a pretext.

On a sudden, however, a single despatch-box sufficed, and George Marsham appeared alone; but a plausible motive, explained the absence of the showiest of the two Downing Street butterflies. Lord Higham being compelled by routine of duty to abandon his *lares* and *penates* and little convalescents, in order to take his turn of attendance on Her Majesty at Balmoral, poor Amy could not be left unprotected at the Grange. Amidst her thirty well-disciplined, attentive servants, surrounded by obsequious dependants and friendly neighbours, it was judged necessary that her wild, reckless brother should be by her side!

Such, at least, was the explanation afforded by the Pamphleteer; watching the while the candid countenance of Placidia, in hopes of detecting in her face confirmation of his suspicions that the suit of Amy's brother to Amy's friend, had been eminently unsuccessful.

He was too well acquainted with the nature of Bob Horsford's feelings towards children in general, and his little nephew and niece in particular, to have been hoodwinked into believing that his perpetual visits to Heckington, on pretence of avuncular affection, had any other motive than to waylay the heiress in her walks, and beset her with his importunities; and one Sunday night, when the young secretary, after attending evening service at Heckington Church, insisted on returning to town by the late train, though office hours were not yet over, he implied a liberal eleven, he

that the man whose flightiness of speech and daring irregularities were so repugnant to his own better organised misdoings, had been bowed out from Northover.

There is perhaps no class of society in England more open to insult than its heiresses. Towards them, every species of unmannerly freedom is regarded as permissible. They may be wooed by comparative strangers, all but sword or revolver in hand. They may be addressed anonymously, or under names to them unknown. They may be importuned, harassed, outraged; yet in the sequel, find their resentment of such liberties denounced as arrogant and heartless. Above all, those who have been acquainted with them in their less affluent days, and treated them, when poor, with disregard, may, in the first glow of their prosperity, start up like serpents from their winter torpor, and crawl, threatening, to their feet.

When Miss Corbet, for instance, announced with firm outspokenness to Robert Horsford, not only that she declined his proposals, but that it would be useless to renew them at any future moment, since under no possible circumstances could she change her mind, he became loud and insolent, and affected to reproach her with having "thrown him over."

Like other ill-conditioned men, he seemed to consider an heiress public property, in which every good-looking young fellow possessed a vested right. That she should resent so abrupt and presumptuous a wooing as, if at-

tempted with a sister of his own, he would have treated as an offence, seemed to him an act of manifest impertinence.

To Mrs. Rawdon, by whom a match with Tiny had been suggested to her brother as a last resource, — the desperate step which could alone retrieve his broken fortunes, — he addressed his complaints.

"You will be sorry to hear, my dear Flo," he wrote, "that your motion has fallen to the ground. And what you bring to mind the dowdy little damsel of Grenfell House whom Amy was good enough to tolerate as her bridesmaid only because our goose of a cousin, Mary Tunstall disappointed her, I have scarcely patience for the coolness with which, having become rich by robbing poor Arthur of his birthright, she discovers herself to be too grand a *parti* for my father's son! — But it is all your fault, Flo! — When you recommended me to try my luck with the yeoman's granddaughter, you ought also to have despatched instructions to your tame — I won't say '*cat*,' but *hyæna*, — to vacate the premises in my favour. What chance for a rough-and-ready fellow like myself, nourished upon brandy-and-water and cigars instead of Seltzer water and sentiment, — so long as that Lovelace for the million, George Marsham, is perpetually muffing it by her side? — Confound the fellow! — Both at Cleveland and Northover, he was always sneaking after us on the watch, like a yellow-bellied plain clothes; and the result was that we

ing which I will never forgive either of them. Some day or other, Master Marsham may chance to find me playing the Detective with himself!"

In these assertions, as in most others, Bob Horsford indulged in exaggeration amounting to falsehood. At Hlevelands, George Marsham *occasionally* met Miss Lorbet, as a fellow guest: — Northover, he had never entered. Though Placidia was unentitled to exclude from Heckington Hall the brother-in-law of its owner, a forbearance which had more than once exposed her to an interview with the individual so anxious to whitewash himself at her expense, — Mr. Marsham could plead no privilege for intrusion; and on his first arrival in Hertfordshire, she had issued such orders as secured her from his visits.

Her whole time and heart were, in fact, given up to the children; for whom her love was almost maternal. There was not, as in the case of most young mothers, an exacting husband with counter-claims on her time; — wanting to be walked and talked with, — to have his notes answered and new books cut and assorted; and he could consequently dedicate to them every hour of the day, and dream of the night. Immured in Harley Street during the childhood of her little brothers, Tiny was enjoying, for the first time, the delight of watching the beautiful development, leaf by leaf, petal by petal, of the human blossom which it is woman's especial mission to cultivate and cherish.

She had, formerly, sometimes joined the general cry against the troublesomeness of little children; and even wondered what amusement Amy Higham could find in sitting, hour after hour, with a baby on her knee. But now, the rapid progress of her loving little Evvy, and the precocious intelligence she discerned or fancied in the countenance of her baby godchild, supplied every moment with unforeseen interest. Had they been her own children, she could not have loved them more. Had they been her own, she could not have loved them so exclusively.

At times, she found herself wondering whether, had Willy survived, he would have attached himself as she was doing, in spite of the Hornford blood in their veins, to these new representatives of his race; and, more than once, tears had found their way into her compassionate eyes, at the idea of that poor forlorn, loveless, Aunt Jane, who might have warmed up into tenderness had she lived to behold the promising progeny of her first-born.

But would *she* ever have hung, as Tiny was doing, over the sweet little face of the new Sophia, — watching the light brighten in the depths of its violet eyes, like sunbeams reflected on a lake, as if responsive to the endearing words softly whispered in its ear; — or the movements of the feeble little arm and waxen hand, attempting to reach the loving face bent over it; — or some new inflexion in the *etc.*

to indicate its perfect satisfaction? — Would *she* have even relinquished her collection of snakes and centipedes, to have her knees climbed upon, and her dress destroyed, by an uproarious boy, beautiful and wilful as a panther's whelp, and at present only to be tamed by the caresses of Tuddy? —

No matter! — Enough that such companionship sufficed for the happiness of Placidia; who had begun to reckon the autumn months she was enjoying, in spite of such interludes as Bob Horsford's insolent courtship, and Marsham's stealthy intrusions, as among the happiest of her life. She seldom wrote to Mrs. Rawdon; for she found that it was one of Mrs. Milsum's most valued privileges to despatch a daily bulletin to Craigdonnon; and with her cousin, she had altogether ceased to correspond. And thus, hearing of their movements only at third hand, through the Saturday visits to Clevelands of the Pamphleteer, her uncertain tenure of the pleasures she was monopolising tended largely to their enhancement. A change of weather, an early winter, might bring back Florence, at any moment, to resume her maternal rights! —

One clear bright Sunday afternoon in October, she was wishing herself joy of the steady openness of the weather, as likely to detain the sportsmen another month in the north. To facilitate Mrs. Milsum's weekly devotions in Heckington Church, (a relaxation to which the *Semiramis in dimity* strenuously adhered,) the children

always spent their Sundays at Northover; and while the infant was either airing in the sunshine, or laid to sleep by its nurse in a cot especially provided for it in Tiny's apartment, Miss Corbet devoted herself to the task of amusing Evvy; — endeavouring, as duty required, to interpose between their games of play as much of Dr. Watts as usually overclouds the Sunday afternoons of a well-regulated child.

On the present occasion, the boy would not hear of the Busy Bee. Mr. Corbet had just endowed him with his first humming top: the buzz of which, he found far more melodious; and Tuddy was forced to stoop and stoop, and spin and spin, till the braids of her fine hair became loosened, and her usually trim array was not a little disordered.

A sudden diminution of light in the Studio, caused her to raise her eyes from the floor where the little fellow was seated, intent upon his toy; and on looking towards the darkened window, she perceived, leaning upon the sill, with a smiling face and in an attitude of intense admiration, the man who was expressly excluded from her sanctuary.

To persist, at that moment, in her sentence, was out of the question. Receiving no Sunday visitors, the servants, as well as Mr. Corbet, were at church, and the garden-door was open. In a few moments, he made his way, unmolested and unannounced, into the forbidden Studio! —

CHAPTER XIII.

"WHEN you reflect, my dear Miss Corbet, that it *might* have been a ticket-of-leave man who profited by the defenceless state of your citadel to intrude upon you, I trust you will not resent my presumption," said he, scarcely advancing beyond the threshold till he had received from his startled hostess the overgracious welcome usually produced by embarrassment.

"It is rather *my* duty to apologise," said she, rising hurriedly from her knees, "that there was no one to introduce you into the house."

"Pardon me. I was most especially introduced into the house. I met Corbet on his way to church, who told me that I should find you at home, and alone; and that my aid in keeping your unruly little cousin in order, might not be unacceptable."

By this time, both were seated; and Evvy instantly proceeded to establish himself on Marsham's knee, with the paces of which he seemed as familiar as with a favourite pony.

"I fancied the Freres were in Yorkshire?" said Finy, who was gradually recovering her Placidian composure. "Lady Frere wrote me word that they were *start for the North, on Wednesday.*"

my paternal acres. But the
the old or young birds?) — he

"So that you will have to
London," replied the unsympa
father had described, the pre
from a few hours' visit of b
that he had seen nothing in t
stalls, and empty omnibuses.

"The Cleveland's housekeep
and the Sunday-trains are so
probably wait till morning," said
that Tiny did not second the
had already received from Henr.

"But how came you to me
to church, when your road fr
directly east — "

first visit to Mrs. Milsum and her nurslings, at the Hall. — But, again, as at Cleveland, the birds (and still, I scarcely know whether to say the young or old,) had flown!”

Tiny was satisfied. She was far better pleased that he should have walked over from Cleveland for a sight of his friend's children, than in compliment to herself. Lest he should fancy her piqued by his explanation, she became more cordial; endeavouring to discuss Highland deer-stalking and Yorkshire covert-shooting, as if deeply interested in the sport enjoyed by Arthur Rawdon and Sir Barton Frere.

“In point of fact,” rejoined her visitor, “poor Frere cares no more for shooting, than I for astronomy. But as his fogleman, Lord Higham, cherishes remote instincts of sportsmanship, and as it has come to be reckoned among the canonical virtues of a cabinet-minister to be a good shot, Cleveland must have its pointers and retrievers, like other country seats that respect themselves.”

“Sir Barton can afford to dispense with a good game-bag,” said Miss Corbet — “so long as he figures honourably in the leaders of the Times.”

“Thanks for your spirited defence of my *chef!* — But leaders in the Times, which possess a certain authority in the Ides of March, give place to the columns of *Bell's Life*, at the time of year when *pheasants* are counted by hundreds, instead of votes.

He was interrupted by
from his little jockey; with
approach of Nurse Milsum
mined to make best pace
his gallop.

In order to escape a *tête-à-tête*
(the hour being at hand for
children to the Hall,) Miss C
them; again pointedly suggest
road to Cleveland lay in a
would not hear of separation
that "Marshy," as he was called
pois of the F. O., should
while "Tuddy's baby" fell to

In compliment to a visit

beauty of the landscape; and as Evvy and his palfrey kept up a constant interchange of sport and mirth, they arrived at the porch of Heckington a noisy, merry party, almost regretting that the walk was at an end.

As they passed the windows, Marsham was too much engrossed by the wilful charge who had blindfolded him with his own wide-awake, to take heed of an incident which greatly surprised Miss Corbet. The brightness of a glowing fire lighted up the windows of a small room adjoining the hall: the only sitting-room at present prepared for use.

"We seem to have been expected," said she, — unable to account for the circumstance; while the head-nurse, whose hands were released by the usurpation of her double duty, having preceded them by a few steps in order to ring the hall-bell and secure immediate admittance, was still more astonished by the appearance of Mrs. Rawdon's footman, Robert, in place of the tidy little housemaid she had left there early in the afternoon.

The mystery was soon explained. The family had arrived! —

Had the announcement regarded the occupation of Heckington by an invading army, neither Tiny nor her companion could have looked more aghast. Perhaps, could they have followed their inclinations, both would have beat a retreat. But their coming had been too vociferously announced by the merriment of the little boy, *not to have reached the ear of his mother.* All

they could do, therefore, was to hurry into the hall and rejoice her anxious eyes by the sight of her child.

As Miss Corbet paused a moment at the door to remove, with something of a nurse's vanity, the hood which partly covered the fair face of her little child, Mr. Marsham, with Evvy still mounted on his back, pressed forward into the room. But while he still lingered, to draw down the plaits of the little hood and make the most of the charms of the last Nephew Heckington, instead of the fond kisses she expected to hear showered by Florence on the cheeks of her son, she heard only a reproachful whisper, (probably addressed to Arthur) of "Abominably careless! — You ought to have ascertained whether the train was altered." —

A moment afterwards, when she entered the room triumphant at the idea that she was about to present Mrs. Rawdon a pretty little girl, smiling and sitting in place of the helpless mass of finery she had behind, great was her amazement to perceive that Arthur was in the room! — Only George was looking crestfallen and sullen.

Instead of advancing to meet her, and taking her from her arms, Mrs. Rawdon sat gazing upon her with the smallest token of recognition; with a wild, wretched countenance, as if absorbed in events without from Heckington.

But this was perhaps because Mr. Marsham

of extending his arms lovingly towards her, kept exclaiming — “*Papa — papa! — Je veux voir mon petit papa!*” — Disowned and defied by one child, she seemed little disposed to recognise the other!

It was not, however, wonderful that the little boy was unwilling to exchange the happy face and sympathetic voice of “Tuddy” for the haggard, travel-stained woman, who reproved him in so hoarse a voice.

The first words of the astonished Sophia Corbet, who was beginning to doubt whether Mrs. Rawdon were quite in her right senses, were — “Perhaps you would rather I should take them away? — Perhaps you would rather see them when you have rested from your journey?”

After a moment’s pause, during which Mr. Marsham set down his unruly charge, the lady of Heckington successfully struggled to regain her self-possession.

“Thank you, thank you! — By no means,” said she. “They have been away from me long enough already, and I am here only for an hour or two.”

Then snatching into her arms the little girl, who instinctively recoiled from her dark bonnet and travelling-veil, she pressed her convulsively to her bosom, and burst into an agony of tears.

Poor Tiny, feeling completely *de trop*, now stole from the room to summon Mrs. Rawdon’s maid, to whom her hysterics and their requirements were familiar. But she did not leave the house. She waited, lest her consolations or aid should be required; having ascertained

meanwhile from the old Heckington housekeeper that "Master was still in Scotland, and Mrs. Rawdon only passing through, on her way to Torquay, where old Mr. Hornford lay in the last extremity."

It was not, however, by Florence, but by Mr. Marsham, that more formal explanations were eventually conceded.

"Poor Mrs. Rawdon appears half out of her mind," said he, in a subdued voice, indicating a very different frame of mind from that in which they had entered the house. "She has not only travelled night and day from Craigdonnon, — (more than two days on the road!) but met with a bad overturn near Perth. You must have perceived that her arm was in a sling; and I cannot help fearing the concussion has produced injury to the brain."

"If she is sufficiently collected to have afforded you all this information," Miss Corbet was beginning —

"Not one word of it, — I have been talking to Robert, her old servant, who seems terribly anxious about his lady. It was her intention, it seems, but for a change of Sunday trains, to start for London as soon as she had seen her children, in order to proceed at once from town to Torquay, by the mail train."

Poor Tiny was not a sufficiently experienced traveller to remember that mail-trains do not leave London on the Sabbath day; and this plausible explanation inspired her with sincere compassion.

hus defied fatigue and danger, that she might be present at her father's last moments. The strangeness of Arthur's conduct in not escorting, on so sacred an expedition, the wife to whom he was passionately attached, might have excited her surprise, — perhaps her mistrust, — but that she was only too well aware of his enmity to the Lorsfords.

In a moment, she was with Florence; on whom Mademoiselle Justine was now in attendance; and her travelling habiliments being partially removed, Miss Corbet was shocked to perceive how old she was looking; in face, pale as death; in figure, wasted to a degree that could owe nothing to her recent journey or accident.

"You seem sadly indisposed, dear Florence," said he with the utmost concern. "You cannot, — indeed, you cannot resume your journey to-night. You are quite unequal to further exertion."

"I should suffer far more by remaining here," murmured Mrs. Rawdon, in faint tones, to which her pale lips were scarcely unclosed to give utterance. "I must get on. I have been wretchedly delayed on the road. — *must* get on."

"But if you take a good night's rest (which is indispensable for you in your present weak state,) you may still reach Torquay by to-morrow afternoon."

"I tell you, Tiny, I must go at once! — I will go *once*. — The same post-horses which brought me

from Hitchen are to take me back to the station. There is a late train."

Too well was Tiny acquainted with her wilfulness to persist in remonstrance. When Florence said "I will," nothing short of a miracle could deter her from her purpose. Aware that, to reach the Station in time, she must leave Heckington within an hour, Miss Corbet hastened from the room to give orders for immediate refreshment for Mrs. Rawdon, suitable to her delicate condition; and having, in traversing the hall, again encountered Mr. Marsham, she appealed to him to endeavour to dissuade their friend from her journey.

"I have just heard from Robert the particulars of her frightful accident," said she, shuddering as she recurred to it; "and I assure you poor Florence ought to have rest. Pray, pray assist me in prevailing upon her to remain here for the night!"

"I quite agree with you as to the propriety of the measure; but I fear dissuasion is useless. In her present excited state, the best thing is to let her have her way."

"In that case," added Tiny, with perfect natu-
 "you can surely manage to escort her to town? If she choose to be alone, you can at all events travel by the same train, and see her safe to her hotel."

The Pamphleteer had too much command of himself to do more than declare his desire to be of service; and on Miss Corbet's expressing an in-

and to Clevelands for his luggage, he replied that it was already despatched to the Station. Dinner he equally declined. After his late luncheon, to dine an hour later than usual, at his London club, would be no penance.

Thus reassured, she returned with a more cheerful countenance to the room in which Florence still lay extended on the sofa.

"What have you and Mr. Marsham been settling between you?" said she, in a peevish voice, as Tiny re-entered. "I heard your voices together in the hall."

"That it would be far better for you to remain here quietly for the night."

"*Grazie, grazie!* — Admirably arranged for all parties!" interrupted Florence in her bitterest tone of former days.

"But that, if you persisted in going to town, so as to start by the first train for Torquay, you must not object to his escorting you. Indeed, indeed, Florence, you are not in a state to travel with only servants to take care of you!"

Mrs. Rawdon fixed her eyes wonderingly upon the face of poor Placidia, as if to satisfy herself that the suggestion was not ironical.

"Could Arthur have anticipated what you were about to undergo on the road, he would certainly never have allowed you to leave Scotland alone," added Miss Morbet.

"I *chose* to come alone. Where was the use of annoying him by curtailing his sport?"

"At all events, ill as you are, he would be very angry with us all, — with my father, — myself, — Mr. Marham, — if we allowed you to start without protection. — Pray, dear Florence, submit to our entreaties."

She submitted. She even consented to taste the arrow-root, peaches, and grapes set before her; while Mr. Marham hastily partook, standing, of a crust and a glass of sherry.

When the carriage was announced to be in readiness to convey them to the Station, Mrs. Rawdon seemed suddenly to recollect that it was incumbent upon her to take leave of the children whom she had come to Heckington expressly to visit. But the interview was a hurried one; and her farewell to Miss Corbet was hurried and cold.

It would have been cruel, however, to find her with the deportment of a person undergoing severe bodily suffering, as well as hastening, in defiance of it, to the deathbed of one of her parents.

That she was not only bewildered by physical pain, but apprehensive that increasing indisposition might further delay the journey, was evident by her insisting on having Justine in the carriage with her. It was in vain that Mademoiselle protested she should "go to Madame and Monsieur, — that she should."

etter on the box with Robert." — Mrs. Rawdon ably replied that her services would probably be required on the road.

Thus doubly escorted, Miss Corbet became comparatively reconciled to the departure of her perverse friend.

CHAPTER XIV.

"Poor Horsford! — If it hadn't been for that shallow, make-believe wife of his, the poor old fellow might have breathed his last at Clevelanda, and been laid by the side of his parents, in his own parish," said Henry Corbet, with hearty sympathy, when his daughter recounted to him, at dinner, the startling events of the afternoon. "Better than I expected of Mrs. Rawdon, my dear, to start off and travel five hundred miles, in order to comfort her father's deathbed!"

"You would have said so, indeed, papa, had you seen how severely she was suffering from her late accident," replied his daughter.

"Deuced lucky, that her husband's friend, Mr. Marsham, should happen to have walked over from Clevelanda at the right moment. Lucky, too, my dear, that I hadn't fixed him to dine with us; for he's a punctilious sort of gentleman, and might have thought it necessary to keep the engagement. To tell you the truth, Tiny, it's thought in the neighbourhood that he's sweet upon you. And as you are not, thank goodness, the sort of girl to take pleasure in leading a man on, only for the shabby triumph of throwing him off."

as well not to invite him to a family-dinner, lest he and his varnished boots should take it for encouragement."

"You need not have been afraid, papa. It never would have occurred to him. Mr. Marsham is not a marrying man."

"I wouldn't swear to *that*. He mayn't be a philandering man. — People with such over-hard heads have seldom over-soft hearts. But if ever I saw a chap with a sharp eye for the main chance, Marsham's the man; and marrying a young woman of fortune, my dear, is at least as pleasant a way of earning his bread as scribbling at a desk, year after year, till, on obtaining preferment, he has grown as bald and pompous as Privy-Councillor Frere."

"I suspect Mr. Marsham is far more enamoured of the freedom of bachelor life, than of the happiest home that love or money could procure."

"Folks don't think so, Tiny. The last time we were all at Clevelands, Mrs. William Hartland kept bothering me to know when the match was to be; — and whether she wasn't to invite Mr. Marsham with us the day we dined at Shrublands. She asked me point blank, whether you were not engaged."

Tiny, who had often wished to put her open-hearted father on his guard against the artful cross-questioning of the little lady who officiated as Mrs. Horsford's deputy-catechist, now hinted her hopes that he had been very decided *in his denial*.

"I trust it is not necessary to say that if there was no other man on the face of the earth, my dear father," said she, "nothing would tempt me to marry Mr. Marsham; — a thoroughly unamiable person; — *more* than unamiable — unprincipled. But that I knew how much you disapprove Sunday travelling, I should have entreated you to accompany poor Florence to town this evening, rather than allow her to incur an obligation to him."

"I shall be glad to hear she's safe at Torquay," rejoined Mr. Corbet. "I like her better for starting off the old Squire, than I ever thought to like Florence Horsford; and I like her husband less for letting her go alone, than I ever thought to like Arthur Rawdon. — I suppose, my dear, she'll write and tell you when she arrives?"

"I fear not. She was not cordial. Florence has an uncertain a temper!"

"Most fine ladies are capricious, I fancy. But she can't but feel thankful to you, Tiny, for all your love and kindness to her children?"

"Even of them, she took very little notice. It is a great comfort, to know, poor little things, that her prolonged absence will enable me to retain them for a time."

The prognostications of Miss Corbet were verified. A week elapsed, and no letter arrived from

though the weather became cold and stormy, Mr. Rawdon still remained in the North.

However averse to the Horsfordian system of "pumping," Tiny was too anxious to obtain tidings of these ungracious people, to refuse herself a visit to Shrublands; where all that regarded the state of the family was sure to be known. But on observing to Mrs. Hartland that the newspapers had not yet announced the death of the poor old Squire, she was a little perplexed by the reply.

"*Death*, my dear Miss Corbet? — I am happy to say, he is better than he has been for months! — I had a letter some days ago, from poor dear Mrs. Horsford, written almost in spirits."

"The arrival of her daughter must have been as cheering to *her*, as Mr. Horsford's unexpected recovery to Mrs. Rawdon," observed Miss Corbet.

"*What* daughter! — *What* arrival? — Are not the Highams at the Grange, and the others still in the North?"

"Mrs. Rawdon passed through Heckington, nearly ten days ago, on her way to Torquay."

"I think you must be mistaken," said Mrs. Hartland, with an affable smile.

"We are told to believe only half we hear," rejoined Tiny. "But the evidence of my own eyes I cannot distrust. I am sorry to say, that they showed poor Florence to me extremely worn and ill, from the results of an accident she met with on her road from Scotland."

"Very extraordinary! — I wonder Mrs. Horford should not have apprised me of her coming —"

"It appeared to be a hasty project, and her journey —"

"And it is still stranger, that my letter of the 1st should say nothing of her accident."

"Mrs. Horford probably concluded that you heard of it from myself."

That she might not be the means of putting trifling surmises on the subject into circulation, Corbet now endeavoured to divert the conversational inquiries after Mrs. Hartland's prize-poultry, — her China fowls and speckled Dorkings; and, as suspected, the full tide of the little lady's vanity immediately streamed forth, effacing all trace of Horford Rawdons.

A few days afterwards, arrived the Freres; and then, Miss Corbet felt sure of authentic news from Higham Grange.

But alas! they cared as little just then for Rawdon's movements, as for the flight of the swallows from their eaves. Lady Frere could think and talk of Yorkshire. It was her first introduction to English hospitality on its noblest scale; and Villa-lilla, even the fluctuating proprietorship of the neighbourhood of Branshaw Combe, had not prepared her for the solid, well-established dignity of the

, who are as steady a growth of the Yorkshire
its mediæval oaks.

was beginning to think no park worth mention-
t did not contain a ruined Abbey or Priory, and
a mile-stones; and seemed to look down on the
the best-preserved Manor, unless its woods could
a spot or two notorious for a fatal poaching-
like the ghastly crosses which, by the brigand-
l way-side of Spanish or Neapolitan roads, record
ne murdered traveller lies below.

that her husband's head was screwed to his
rs far more firmly than her own, the ambitious
would instantly have attempted to Yorkshire-ise
oderate establishment; and thus afford a paltry
t, resembling the dwarfed forest-trees of a Man-
garden. She seemed to experience as much
y in reinstating herself within the contracted
of her own shire and domain, as was felt by the
ed Oriental in replacing in his bottle the emanci-
bjinn.

on when Sir Barton, who was already off to
g Street, returned from town, Miss Corbet fared
er. If the mind of the bald-headed P. C. re-
unshaken by the sight of regiments of keepers
aters, larders that might have victualled a navy,
c gas-works capable of illuminating a city, or
houses that would have put the Hesperides to
h, it was spontaneously recontracted into official

pragmaticality by even momentary contact with Tape. Half an hour in Downing Street had recast Sir Barton with that superficial induration, which, at the moment he sets his signature to a state-paper, which sets him up in marble in one of the aisles of Westminster Abbey, or in bronze on the Queen's way, seems to convert the "complement external" minister into artificial-stone.

"Yes, — he had seen Marsham, certainly he had seen Marsham," he replied, with an air of self-absorption such as Lord Higham, in his Sir-James-Armistead, had been apt to display. "Marsham was, of course, at his post. But there had been a vast accumulation of public business, in consequence of his own absence from town. That awkward affair of the Zuyder Zee had required their most serious attention; and during his stay in town, despatches had arrived from Madrid which had consequently had very little talk with Mr. who, he was sorry to say, would be unable to go to Cleveland for some time to come."

Disappointed on every side, poor Tiny's ignorance of Mrs. Rawdon's movements was anything but a relief. If either of the children should fall ill, where would she address her? A rainy November confined her to her dull nursery at the Hall. She spent with her, all day long, a portion of every day; affording to the children, as usual exercise, by a game of play in the hall, which was attached to the Tapestry room.

In those former days when Heckington stood empty, poor Willy's sudden departure from England perched her mind with even deeper anxieties than she now enduring, Tiny used to stroll over from North- to the deserted house; and soothe the disturbance of her spirit by wandering up and down those still, late rooms, where she was secure from intrusion.

An amusing book of travels, from a female pen,* has lately recurred to a remark, frequently made, that the contemplation of a distant line of mountains, grand, quiet, and immutable, exercises a composing influence on the mind.

Most true, as regards the works of Nature! But as regards the works of Art, the daily contemplation of a picture-gallery exercises an almost equally sedative power. Whatever the turmoil of our feelings, whatever worries of domestic life, *there*, still and solemn, hang the sage, grave ancestral faces, which seem to whisper, *we*, too, lived and suffered, — struggled and decided. — And what are we now? — Be patient — be calm! — Mortal cares are transient as the ripple on a stream."

On this account, a national portrait-gallery possesses ten-fold value. History, which grows dusty on the shelf, retains its lifelike brightness on the wall, and a tranquillising influence emanates from its lessons. Recalled by Froissart, Holinshed, Clarendon, or Macaulay,

* "A Timely Retreat."

it may stir our passions, or aggravate our prejudices. But if the selfish despotism of Charles or Strafford, depicted by the pen, arouses our indignation, the penitence and intelligence of the one, the noble sternness of the other, as bequeathed to us by the pencil of Vandyck, plead for them from the grave. We turn away, reflecting rather on their atonement, than their fault; and smile in remembering how little the worst of sovereigns or ministers can effect, to discompose the majestic system of the universe.

Even a Spanish King, or idiotic Infanta, transfused to the wall like some remarkable reptile or insect, by the genius of Velasquez, becomes as powerful a teacher of the littleness of human greatness, and the absurdity of monsterring our miserable nothings in a world where "DIEU SEUL EST GRAND," as the most eloquent homily dictated by the wisest of Primates.

But this time-cherished consolation was now lost to Tiny. The old familiar faces of her forefathers had long been taken down and massed against the wall of the lumber-room, till the moment arrived for their redistribution under the authority of the new proprietors of Heckington; and it only embittered her vexations to wander up and down those empty, cheerless rooms whose walls, like a human face devoid of expression or meaning, presented a blank.

The "Girls with the Cherries" would have furnished company in her solitude: — the white an-

and panels were cold as her own heart! The voice of the Heckington of to-day spoke of the morrow, not of the past; — of future gaieties, future frivolities, future penalties and pains! —

She was wandering there in the twilight of a November day, while the rain poured unrelentingly against the windows and splashed from the sills, till the brougham which was to fetch her home to Northover made its appearance; having taken leave of the children in their warm, snug nursery, that she might be no obstruction to the tea-taking of Mrs. Milsum. But for once, Semiramis was tempted to disregard that favourite banquet; and having stealthily followed Miss Corbet into the chilly saloon, carefully closed both the doors, before she accosted her.

“Asking your pardon, mom, for the introosion,” said she, “I should be particlar glad to know whether you’ve heard lately from my missus?”

“Not since she was here, Mrs. Milsum. You have perhaps received a letter?”

“Not a line, mom, — which makes me very oneasy. I have written more than once to Master, at Craigdonnon, as Missus Rawdon desired, with accounts of the dear children; and once to herself, without orders, to Torquay. And I was just a thinking of writing again; when to-day’s second post brings a letter from Missus Rawdon’s Mamselle Justine to Master Evvy’s Mamselle

Luckily, a window-seat
saloon contained not a

"It seems, mom, that Missus has been unusually ill!"

"And where is she some degree reassured :
alarming intelligence wa

"At Higham Grange days ago they was able was took with an attack she *would* leave this, in her. — And there they in wilderness, as one may

particular, because from the first he was opposed to her taking the journey. — She started, at last, when he was away at a bothy, t'other side of Craigdonnon Forest!" —

"But *now*, Mrs. Milsum, — *now*! — How is she *now*?"

"Much better, mom, — amost well. When it turned out that poor old Mr. Horsford warn't in the danger she'd fancied, and that her coming suddenly upon him was like to do him harm, she went straight down into Somersetshire, and from thence wrote to master, who lost no time in rejoining her."

That part of the story was the only one that did not surprise Miss Corbet. But, since Florence was convalescent and Arthur returned from the Moors, they would probably soon be at home?

Semiramis thought *not*.

"There wasn't no talk in Mamselle's letter of the return of the family to Heckington."

The following day, however, the pioneers' of the brigade made their appearance, in the shape of the French cook with his *batterie de cuisine* and *marmiton*; the butler, and footman with their plate-chest. The establishment at Craigdonnon was broken up, and the shooting quarters resigned to the proprietor.

Again a few days, and a legion of upholsterers and *workmen* from London brought instructions from Mrs.

Rawdon concerning the unpacking and placing of the furniture; and confusion worse confounded, ensued.

But out of the noisy Chace, Order gradually arose. Before the week was at an end, blazing fires in every room, and every room richly and appropriately furnished, created a new and cheerful family-home, within the astonished old walls of Heckington Hall.

CHAPTER XV.

IF "Tuddy" had experienced some little mortification at the coolness with which, at their last meeting, her little *protégés* were treated by their mother, she was amply repaid by the exquisite delight exhibited by Arthur at the progress made by his little ones during his long absence.

Previous to their return from Somersetshire, Florence herself addressed an affectionate letter of thanks to Miss Corbet, almost worthy of the pen of that flourisher of moral arabesques, Mrs. Horsford; — apologising for the flightiness of her conduct during her previous visit to Heckington, on the grounds that she was suffering from concussion of the brain, and scarcely accountable for her actions.

"She was now convalescent," she said, "and coming home to enjoy a cheerful, sociable winter at Heckington, with her family and neighbours; among the nearest and dearest of whom, she accounted the inmates of Northover."

And Tiny, who foresaw that it was only by bearing and forbearing with the caprices of her cousin's wife she should retain the smallest influence in her nursery, prepared herself to be patient and friendly. That the same

envelope contained a still more cordial note from Higham, expressing her gratification at the part of their speedy meeting, (as Lord Higham, who his duties must detain them the greater part of the year in town, had promised that she and her children should pass their Christmas holidays with her sister, to diminish the satisfaction of Placidia.

And now commenced, in that hitherto torpid state, the stir and bustle consequent on the establishment of the young couple in the enjoyment of health and wealth in a spacious country-mansion, which at least once was eager to display to the neighbourhood. As to the luxurious furnishing and ornamentation of the house, it is oftener the result of vanity than of self-interest; half of those who half-ruin themselves by this means, being fated to see little of their own belongings the remainder of their days, but canvas-bags and covers. Florence Rawdon would have cared for her Gobelin *portières* or candelabra of gilt-brass, she not wishing to prove to her Hertfordshire neighbours that the river with golden sands which had discoloured the Cleveland, was rising again, Alpheus-like, at its source. She was delighted at the thoughts of exhibiting to her wealthier sisters (though a purer taste was to be rescued from the china-closets of the Hall the old Dresden preserved there by Arthur's grandfather) several gorgeous services bearing the Rawdon name, expressly manufactured for her at Sèvres; and

with which the still un-Parisianised Lady Frere surveyed the boudoir furniture translated and re-translated from the Champs Elysées and Curzon Street, and now most incongruously adorning one of the rooms of the Tapestry suite, delighted her frivolous mind.

The Charles Turbervilles could not of course be spared from the Abbey, after their long absence in the Highlands. But as soon as the hollies in Heckington Park afforded to the fieldfares their annual banquet, Lady Higham and the four little Armsteads were welcomed to the Hall.

Instinctively recoiling from such a renewal of intimacy with Mrs. Rawdon as might revive her fitful gusts of temper, Miss Corbet was not sorry that the holidays of her young brothers afforded a plea for partially absenting herself from the family circle. But as Alfred, who had progressed into a tall handsome youth of nearly sixteen, was not only his father's companion in the hunting-field, — (mounted on a fine hunter, the gift of "the great West Indian heiress,") — but by no means an undesirable addition to the evening circle, she could not always decline the invitations forced upon her.

As soon as Lord Higham was able to leave town for the Christmas recess, — Sir Barton following in his wake with penumbral punctuality, — even Arthur, though habitually morose and taciturn, seemed to rouse himself, to do the honours of his house to the man he so thoroughly *esteemed*.

him as much as I do; — that
much as you are liked and value

“Will it be a large party?”
fortunately I have half promised

“No, no! — You have pro-
ought to prevent a meeting wit
sides, you and Corbet can bring
have only Frere and his wife,
two who are spending the holid

“Not Mr. Marsham, I hope?”

“Thank you for the *hope*; —
fancied you far too well acquaint
to necessitate the inquiry.”

“I have not so much as hee
for a month past.”

“Nor seen it written by him

— said he, perceiving that Edgar was too many yards in advance of them to be within earshot.

“*Correspond with him?*” was her astonished reply. “What can have put such an idea into your head?”

“Say rather *who!* — I shall have no scruple in answering — ‘Mrs. Horsford;’ — who heard from her son, and repeated to her daughter, that you were engaged to marry him.”

“But that Mrs. Horsford’s friend at Shrublands once mentioned such a report to my father, I should be greatly surprised,” was Miss Corbet’s honest and indignant reply. “To do Mr. Marsham justice, however, I never had occasion to express to *him* what I now say to yourself, that no circumstance or advantage upon earth could remove my personal objections to him.”

If any reply were vouchsafed by her cousin to this frank statement, it was in so inarticulate a voice, that Tiny could make nothing of it. — After a brief pause, therefore, she resumed,

“And, as the rumour has probably reached Mr. Marsham as well as myself, I give him credit for good taste in abstaining from his usual visits to Clevelanda.”

“Is it possible,” exclaimed her cousin, “that you are still unaware of his having quitted England?”

“Quite possible. But now, I remember that he has long been in the habit of spending his winter-holidays in Paris.”

“*Business, not pleasure, has called him away. Higham*

fine an ambassador for you, in Wotton, as '*Vir bonus peregrinæ reipublicæ causâ*.' Marsham v 'a bad man sent abroad to his country!'"

"Let the cause of his absence be glad he is not to be among Placidia. "Except Evvy, of my playfellow, no one, I suspect, "

The face of her companion she confronted, as they reached which Edgar had preceded the sinister expression, announcing some sort of mistrust or perplexity, renounced her intention. A fit of friendliness seemed to have

But pleasanter days were in

amidst the general joy, all hearts as well as all purses should be opened.

Perhaps, when the Saturday's dinner brought in addition, not only Placidia and her father from Northover, but the party from Cleveland, he would have been content to dispense with the confusion of tongues that accompanied them. For among the guests, was Sir Justin Roche; whose anecdotes, however enlivening to a conventional London dinner-party, where people arrive tired out by their last night's revels and morning's Park, and languid from the effects of an atmosphere as noxious during the season as that of Sierra Leone, were sadly out of place in a country-house; where guests assemble in good faith and good neighbourship, overflowing with local politics, and bringing with them a load of superfluous health and animation to throw off in hearty talk.

But in addition to the Companion to the Almanack, the Freres brought with them a Parisian toy of the most gimcrack description; a flagrant specimen of hybrid F.O. fribbledom, — half French, half English, — in the shape of Ommany *Minimus*, in whom the pertness which had been snubbed out of one of his elder brothers by the chaff of the London clubs, and tamed out of the other by the influence of female society, was still rampant.

Recommended to the patronage of Lord Higham by the contiguity of the preserves of Fair Oak and the Grange, he had been appointed junior-attaché in the *Aubourg St. Honoré*; where his present duties consisted

in crossing the t's and dotting the i's of despatches, e alternate line of which might be omitted without b missed; and of representing Great Britain, with credit, in the valse of diplomatic balls, and the *échévelée* of the Bal Mabille. More experienced h were not wanting in the *Chancellerie* of the Emb more active legs could not be found in the capers o *Salle de Bal!*

To perfect the model *attaché*, however, his tact sh expand before the sprouting of his beard, as the blo of fruit-trees precedes their foliage; and poor Percy many, though his flippancy was tolerated under sh of the Arms of England in the Rue St. Honoré, voted elsewhere a forward puppy. Rarely did he h his lips without putting to torture his demure half ther-in-law-once-removed — Sir Barton; — who, an that he should not ruin his professional interests shocking the well-bred, reserved Lord Higham, passed the morning of the Heckington party in adm tering to the young *attaché*, homœopathic doses of C terfield's Letters; and endeavouring to convince him i in spite of the perfection of his Parisian *Argot* Boivin gloves, he had no more right to contribute unmeaning squeak to the arguments of his elders, t the cock-robin perched on a Cathedral organ to ad chirrup to the anthem.

The conceited boy, whose dialect and morality presented a new but not amended edition of Bob F

ford's, listened with sincere pity to the summing-up of the elderly Bore; whose hints on social deportment might, he thought, have been borrowed from those inflicted by the Patriarch in the ark upon Masters Hem, Shem, and Japhet. Shrugging his shoulders, he frankly avowed his impatience to return to a city whose *crème de la crème* is "*crème fouettée*," and whose household bread and household duties are so light: — "those of his native country being decidedly too crusty for his palate."

Perceiving at once how infructive had been his lesson, Sir Barton spared no manœuvres to place the young chatterbox at dinner so far below the salt, as to be out of earshot of Lord Higham; — and, luckily, succeeded. For before the end of the first course, he had published by sound of trumpet his ignorance of those by-words of society with which it is an essential duty of diplomats to be acquainted, by gravely addressing Sir Justin Roche as Sir Index, — evidently supposing it to be his baptismal name; and affecting to pooh-pooh a statement with which that learned archivist was endeavouring to catch the ear of Lord Higham; concerning a claim to an extinct peerage, about to be presented to a Committee of Privileges: founded on a writ of summons, as Baron by tenure, in 1295, ("the 23rd of Edward I.,") discovered by Sir Justin himself, in the Record-office of the Tower.

"'Twelve hundred and ninety-five?' — Come, come! *make it one thousand and sixty-six*, my dear Sir Index!" *said he.* "Why every fourth form boy knows that there's a

BOTH SIR MARTON and his
wards Lord Higham; and great
perceiving that he was far too
cussing with Henry Corbet the
merits of linseed-cake, cotton-c
give ear to the levities of the c

But the *bévue*s of Mr. Perc
not end with Sir Justin. While
ing with praiseworthy patience,
dering sonata of Thalberg, adm
Frere, he felt it incumbent up
the youngest lady present, wit
Parisian fashion and Parisian sc

"By the way, we had an
Paris the other day," said h
cousin, George Marsham; who
Naples on pretence of desiring

for the benefit of Marsham; — who has been endeavouring to elope with the wife of some great personage — or more likely *she* with *him*; — and that, in order to get him out of her way, the *chef* yonder Envoy-extraordinaryed him, to save the honour of the family.”

Desirous from the first moment of his accosting her to check his foolish familiarity, it now became *necessary* to impose silence upon his sarcasms. It occurred to her at once that the “wife” to whom he thus flippantly alluded might be — *must* be — the inconsiderate sister of Amy; — or what interest could Lord Higham entertain in the removal of the supposed delinquent?

Her rejoinder, as she sat, “severe in youthful beauty,” was consequently couched in words so interdictory, that, for many years afterwards, — *i. e.* till he had cast his whelp’s-skin of Ommanyhood, and progressed into a reasonable being, — the youngest hope of Fair Oak recoiled from the gentle Placidia as people fly from a cat which has scratched them; declaring, to all whom it did not concern, that Miss Corbet was a Bishop in crinoline; — and that heiresses in general were as venomous as the toads which they compelled their humble companions to swallow.

But though Tiny had managed to silence his calumnious prattle, she could not so easily repress the misgivings to which his information gave rise. She was no pryer into the dark corners of human nature. Her eye *rested upon the wheat* rather than the tares of the field

of Mrs. Rawdon, some well proximately connected with ordinary.

The rumours originally account for her rejection of between herself and Mr. Man Craighdonnon; and if young only partially true, had per jealousy of Florence, and this imperilled her life.

But if the woman whom liked as heartless, were indeed she henceforward to endure and false flatteries? — E — how share with her the children, — how kneel by God? —

armoury, and inappropriate for use. — Should a burglar break in, who would snatch his Andrea Ferrara blade, or ivory matchlock, to defend himself against the foe? —

It was not so with Sophia Corbet. *Her* notions of duty were plain and practical. Without regard to the expediciencies of the case, she said to herself, after revolving in her mind her thronging fears: "If this woman prove guilty, nothing shall tempt me to denounce her. But sooner would I leave Northover, — sooner exile myself from England, — than associate with her again. — Rather *die* than witness the degradation of poor old Heckington, through the infamy of Arthur Rawdon's wife!" —

GREAT was the disappointment finding, the following day, that he was indisposed to join the Heckingtons at the family dinner. He came back with them after morning use of "a cold and sore throat." But after an utterly sleepless night, shocked to her feelings, her nervous state that she was quite unequal

Next day, however, her friend's admittance to Northover; bringing a girl, with the avowed intention of staying there.

"The weather is so favourable to ride with the Freres to the]

"Not for the sake of thwarting them. But if he suspected our anxious desire that he and Florence should be seen together by their county neighbours as soon and as often as possible? —"

"*Seen together?*" exclaimed Tiny, a little astonished. "The Freres and their friends dined on Saturday at Heckington, — the William Hartlands the previous day. Every family in the neighbourhood has either been, or is coming. — Is not *that* seeing them together?"

"Formal dinner-parties differ widely from the intimacy of a *tête-à-tête* ride or walk."

"Still, I cannot fancy that the foxhunters will have leisure to notice whether Mr. and Mrs. Rawdon of Heckington ride or drive to the Meet with the Freres, or alone."

"Considering the painful rumours which are in circulation —"

"Rumours? — what rumours?" — said Tiny gaspingly.

"Only a foolish report that — that — they do not agree quite so well as formerly," replied Amy, colouring to the roots of her hair, as if she had been betrayed into saying more than she intended. "Florence is — I need not tell you — wilful as a child. Your cousin's temper is not his strong point."

"I have seen little of them lately," said Miss Corbet, endeavouring to speak calmly; "but on their return from Italy, it struck me that Arthur was fonder of his wife

than at the time of his marriage, or than I had ever seen him before."

"Did it really, Tiny? — Then other people may have been of the same opinion! And oh! pray God they may retain it!" —

Lady Higham spoke so earnestly, with tears brimming in her eyes, that Miss Corbet did not like to press the subject by further questions. It seemed like taking unfair advantage of her emotion.

She therefore answered cheerfully Lady Higham's abrupt inquiries concerning her mode of educating the brothers who were doing her so much credit; and the manner in which she had so rapidly tamed and softened the rabid furies of little Evvy. The discipline to be adopted with the heir-apparent of Higham Grange, who was still contentedly sucking his thumb in the nursery, already seemed to occupy her mind.

"And what do you intend to do with Alfred?" she persisted, stitching away, as if for life and death, at her Berlin grounding.

"At present, nothing. Half the unhappy destinies in this world seem to me to be created by the interference of friends."

Amy sympathetically nodded her head.

"My father, I am happy to say, is sufficiently of my opinion to leave poor Alfred to the exercise of his own choice. And there is no need of haste; his ultimate fortunes being provided for."

Lady Higham looked up inquiringly from her work.

"I mean that, as at some future time he is to enjoy the Enmore estates, there is less danger to himself if his selection of a career should prove a blunder."

"Nonsense, nonsense, my dear Tiny! — You are not yet three-and-twenty. — And even if you should *not* marry (as you certainly will), and have children of your own, how distant a chance has your heir presumptive of succeeding to your fortune!"

"Even if I married, which I never shall, I could make such an allowance to my brother as would enable him to hold his own in the world far better than as a reluctant clergyman or incompetent lawyer."

"But are the learned professions the sole alternative? — Can Higham's interest be of no avail? — My husband thinks highly of your pupil, dear Tiny, both as to faculties and disposition; and, being quite resolved that he shall never succeed to your property, is bound to provide for him."

"Heaven forbid that I should shelter poor Alfie under a 'Take care of Dowb' species of protection!" replied Miss Corbet, more cheerfully.

"Not when you know, ungrateful girl, the pleasure it would afford my husband to be of service to you?"

"To own the truth," added Miss Corbet, "which you must not think ungracious, I should be sorry, unless with necessity in the case, to chain my bright-eyed, *bright-hearted* brother to the oar of an official desk."

“Surely,” retorted Lady
“since a man must have *some*
a nobler one than to protect
his fellow-subjects, and comm
with the throne?”

“Why generalise from a si
thinking of Lord Higham, —
Corbet has neither *his* birth,
Think of the multitude of sign
who have grovelled and starve
Raphaël and *one* Michael Ange

“But Alfy will not starve
should relent in favour of or
suitors.”

“Would that you were a
wish most in this world, — t
would call—

"The world is so wicked!" cried Lady Higham, letting her work drop helplessly into her lap.

"Wicked, *tant que vous voulez*. But how is its wickedness responsible for my spinsterhood?" rejoined Miss Corbet, who, though tolerably used to the kind-hearted Amy's misapprehensions, could by no means follow her line of reasoning.

"No matter — let us drop the subject, Tiny. — I can't think how we came to talk of it. — I had completely made up my mind to say nothing to you about it."

"Now, you excite my curiosity in earnest!" said Miss Corbet. "It is so unlike *you*, dearest Amy, to have reserves from your friends, that on this occasion it seems premeditated treachery."

By this accusation, Lady Higham was agitated to tears; and no sooner did her sobs reach the ear of her little girl, who was contentedly setting out a toy-farm of Evvy's in the corner of the room, than the poor child's playthings were hastily flung down, her mother's knees climbed upon and her little fondling arms clasped round the neck of Lady Higham.

"Naughty, naughty Tiny, to make my mumsey cry!" she exclaimed, amid a shower of kisses.

By the aid of much mutual endearment, composure was at length restored; and Miss Corbet made up her mind to provoke no further emotion on either side by

whisper, "people have had the mutual attachment and understand you and Arthur."

"*Did* subsist. — Three years could love each other more dearly perfectly unembarrassed. "But Italy, we have scarcely spoken."

Lady Higham gazed at her with her unconcern.

"And what makes you consider us as affectionate as ever finding that her friend attempted

"Not for fancying it, but for cousinly affection they impute to lawful love, — *passionate* love!

me for saying so, imputed it to the influence of your mother, with whom I never was a favourite."

"Far more a favourite than *she* is with Arthur Rawdon."

"At all events," pleaded Miss Corbet, still unmoved by so vague and groundless a charge, "this wretched gossip, invented by Mrs. William Hartland, or some other equally mischievous country-neighbour, shall never prevent my owning an intention to succeed to the maiden-lozenge of my old cousin Lucretia."

"It ought — *indeed*, it *ought*! — I scarcely know how to make you sensible, Tiny, of the importance of my warning. You, who are so good, cannot appreciate the blackness of the sin imputed to you."

Miss Corbet started. — Her heart was beginning to swell. Chaste as Una in thought, word, and deed, it was foreign to her imagination to conceive that even the wickedest of human beings could have devised a slander against her blameless life.

"A long tissue of evil and folly has originated this vile rumour," resumed Lady Higham, in a depressed voice. "After my marriage, my intercourse with my sisters became so interrupted, and my attention so engrossed by my children, that I am scarcely able to connect together either the facts or fictions of the case. When you were with me at the Grange, Tiny, you had not seen your cousin for years; and he was unquestionably, at that time, fondly attached to my sister."

difference by hurrying off to
as a parting interview. He
longer than was needful."

"Mrs. Horsford probably g
the first instance, on the fac
ever saw her daughter, a marr
us by his family," said Tiny,
in that project, neither my cot
share. For my own part, al
exercised over him was to induc
ment to your sister."

"When the fulfilment of
compulsory," rejoined Lady H
they should be broken off? B

A new light seemed to break into the mind of Sophia Corbet, on hearing the case thus presented.

"But the truth is," continued her friend, "the affairs of my poor father were, at that moment, reaching a crisis. You know all about us, dear Tiny; and I may therefore say, without any breach of delicacy, that the house in which sheriffs' officers are hourly expected, is not a spot for calm and prudent deliberation. I believe the sole object of poor mamma in tolerating Mr. Marsham's addresses, was to secure a home for Flo., when driven out of her own."

"But with such kind brothers-in-law as Lord Higham and Charles Turberville, surely she could never be in want of shelter?"

"So it has proved. But up to that time, my husband had shown marked reluctance to have my sisters as inmates; and the Turbervilles were still strongly opposed to their son's marriage. — As to Robert, the future representative of our family, *his* protection would have been worse than nothing."

"Mr. Marsham, then, paid his addresses to Florence during the winter Arthur was at Jamaica?"

"So it appears. — Higham and I knew nothing of it. When the break-up occurred at Cleveland, and the family became established at the Grange, *we* were in London for my confinement; and afterwards, when we occasionally visited Somersetshire, nothing appeared more *natural than that* Mr. Marsham should be spending his

holidays with his relations at the Abbey, and at last officiate, as best man, at Charley's marriage.

A heavy sigh burst from the overcharged heart of Placidia. How blind had she been to the events passing under her eyes; — how incautious, in addressing that fatal letter to Fredville, which all but forced her cousin into the fulfilment of his long-repentant engagement! —

"I cannot but suspect," resumed Lady Higham, perceiving how deeply her auditrice was interested in her recital, "that Florence waited only for formal proposals on the part of George Marham, (who, dependent upon his father, probably still hesitated,) to insist upon the rupture of an engagement which her conviction of Arthur's attachment to yourself had determined her to break off. Unluckily, no decided step had been taken when Arthur wrote, in so liberal and manly a manner, to assert his claims; and Mrs. Enmore's death, which immediately followed, having placed him in an independent position, my mother urged upon Florence that it was her duty towards her family to accept the brilliant position awaiting her."

"So that, after all, she married Arthur with reluctance!" sighed poor Tiny, who was beginning to see more clearly through the meshes of this unhappy entanglement.

"I fear so. I saw nothing of it. At Mr. Bland's request, and in consideration of his

the ceremony was performed with the utmost privacy at Higham Grange; and, as you know, they proceeded at once to the Continent. Had either Higham or I been with them, we should probably have perceived what was passing; and even at the eleventh hour, prevented this disastrous marriage."

Miss Corbet's hands lay folded idly in her lap; her thoughts absorbed in reflection. — That she should have contributed thus presumptuously — thus cruelly — thus foolishly — to the misfortune of one so dear to her! — That she should have interfered in his destinies only to immerse in shame their time-honoured race!

Gradually she threaded, one by one, the dark mazes of the past. Arthur, while redeeming at her instigation his pledge to a woman for whom his passionate attachment had subsided, had been blinded by the cunning manœuvres of Mrs. Horsford to her daughter's coolness towards himself. Amidst the flurry of his hasty return to England after learning the ruin of the Horsfords, — amidst the remorse and contrarieties arising from the death of his mother, he had taken that irretrievable step from which there was no retrogression! —

Still, it was herself, — herself chiefly, — herself *only*, — who was the origin of all these evils.

The first words she found strength to address to Lady Higham, were hoarse with repressed tears.

"*Surely — surely,*" she cried, "when I saw them *first in town*, after their arrival from Italy, they were

perfectly happy together? — Arthur appeared so passionately attached to his wife! — When in her company, he scarcely took his eyes from her face."

"He watched her, I admit. But more from jealousy than love."

"Even at that time, then, Mr. Marsham's attentions were displeasing to him?"

While uttering the words, a painful recollection of George Marsham's visit with Robert Hornford to Mrs. Rawdon's dressing-room in Curzon Street, during the absence of Arthur, and Arthur's sudden return to the house without deigning to make his appearance, occurred to her mind.

"Mr. Marsham visited Rome during the last winter spent there by the Rawdons," said Lady Higham. "I fear that, even then, my sister was the object of his journey."

"Even then! — *Even then!*" — murmured Tiny, as if thinking aloud. "Oh! if one could only forget it all — if one could only forget it!" —

"Or hope that others had forgotten it. That silly young Ommany related several anecdotes at Cleveland, to elucidate which, Sir Justin Roche luckily addressed himself to Higham to supply names and dates. — If he had asked the same questions of Arthur, his suspicions must have been aroused. At present, he knows only that Florence having, in one of her fits of whimsy, quitted Scotland, met with a bright idea."

bad; and that Higham was too considerate to telegraph for him till her danger was over, and we had her safe at the Grange."

"But you have never yet explained to me how Lord Higham himself became apprised of her arrival in town?"

"Because a Queen's Messenger, whom he had despatched to Clevelands to summon back George Marsham who was urgently wanted at the Office, (and being Sunday the telegraph did not work —) returned to town in the same train with them; and, having proceeded straight to Park Lane, informed my husband that his journey had been fruitless, as regarded Clevelands, but that Mr. Marsham was now in town. 'He had seen him accompany Mrs. Rawdon of Heckington to the Great Northern Hotel. The lady seemed so ill,' he said, 'that it was impossible to get speech of Mr. Marsham; but he had left his lordship's letter to be delivered by the waiter.' — Anxious and mistrustful, Higham instantly started off for King's Cross; and as Florence was in no state to be spoken to, insisted upon an interview with her companion. I will not enter, my dear, into the painful investigation that ensued. But you know my husband too well not fully to believe that, were he not convinced the misconduct of my sister amounted only to imprudence, he would not have sought her home, as he did that very night, to Park Lane — *half-dying*, — *half-mad*! — But that there was

interposition!"

"How could she do otherwise
sitive relief to Mr. Marsham
separating them! — And, —
— that I should have to rel
mine!"

Sophia Corbet, leaning t
braced her. But she could n
consolation.

"Remember, however," —
ought *all* to remember in ex
brought up — *how* she was a

"Just as you, yourself,
vised —"

"But *I*, Heaven be praise

passionately in love with his cousin, and, so far from treating Florence with kindness or consideration, still cared only for *you*, to whom he had assigned the regulation of his household and care of his children; — insinuating that you had despatched them together to London, foreseeing the construction likely to be put upon their journey! —”

Poor Tiny clasped her hands in anguish and dismay. Could her thoughtless conduct have really exposed her to the suspicion of such infamy? —

“I have to crave forgiveness, my dear Miss Corbet, for forcing your door, in order to inquire after your health,” interrupted the voice of Lord Higham, who just then entered the room, closely followed by Sir Justin Roche. “Rawdon has been endeavouring to persuade us that you do not receive morning visits. But Sir Justin, having ridden over from Cleveland, instead of joining the foxhunters, for the express purpose of paying you his respects, would have been grieved to return with so poor an account of you as I was able to furnish.”

Poor Sir Index, who had in fact attempted the expedition with the sole view of enlisting Lord Higham’s parliamentary interest in favour of the gentleman whose Baronial progenitor had ayed and noed in the parliament of Edward the First, and whose nearest approach to gallantry consisted in a flirtation with a pet female mummy which he had presented to the British Museum, (*defined by Bob Horsford as “a spicy edition of one of*

ladies to recover their self-po
Henry Corbet made his appeal
splashed upon his overalls a
small desert, Sir Index having
the daughter, was ready to di
perior merits of the sixteen
which, rescued from the oceren
menopha, and germinated un
gas expressly invented for the
day, was replenishing the fie
addicted to experimental farmi

"Consider for a moment,
the bewildered yeoman's son,
dates as "a thing devised by
torture of school-boys, and oc

familiarised you with the events of his reign, and especially of the improvements introduced by him into Egyptian agriculture;) — to the year 1848, when I first brought it under the notice of the Agricultural Society, at that time presided over by my late lamented friend, Lord Landslip, whose granddaughter I am told is about to be married to the new Swedish Ambassador, an ex-professor of the University of Upsal.”

Poor Henry Corbet, whose faculties were becoming alarmingly overclouded by the dust of ages, was beginning to inquire of the fluent and learned Theban whether the founder of the twenty-fifth Egyptian dynasty had stimulated the growth of this wondrous corn by a manure of Peruvian guano, or Syrian locust-pods, when Lord Higham, vexed to perceive a man he so highly regarded swimming out of his depth, rushed to the rescue; by a rhetorical dissertation on the influence of chemical discovery upon modern agriculture, which he knew would afford to the practical farmer the best of the argument, and allow time to his daughter to recover her equanimity and complexion.

Diogenes instructed the ancients that a blush is the livery of innocence. Modern wisdom has decided it to be a symptom of guilt.

To which of the two sources are we to attribute the conscious glow now overspreading the cheeks of poor Placidia? —

CHAPTER XVII.

SOME three weeks afterwards, just as the hospital country-mansions of England were overcrowding its railways with families returning to town for the re-assembly of Parliament, Miss Corbet and her homely waiting-maid stepped from the platform of the Hitchin Station into the identical carriage into which she stood accused of having, the preceding November, forced Florence Rawdon and the Pamphleteer.

On the present occasion, it was not, as on the disastrous Sunday night, a reserved *coupé* that awaited her. The compartment, where two places were vacant, was previously occupied by individuals from remote counties; who, with the scorn entertained by Great Northern travellers for the dwellers in a suburban shire, took upon themselves to decide that the quiet, simply-dressed, and pallid young woman, whose modest luggage consisted of a railway-bag bearing the initials S. C., whose frame appeared so tremulous and whose eyelids were red and swollen, was either a governess going out for the first time, or a young lady suffering from the tooth-ache on her way to town to consult a dentist.

A heavy sigh, which now and then escaped her lips, was, however, less the evidence of pain, than

debility. The heavy interim between Lady Higham's visit to Northover and Tiny's to London, had been filled by an illness, unattended with danger; and it was only the preceding day she had obtained from Dr. Ashe the stereotyped recipe of "change of air;" which, except in the case of children young enough to play with sheep-folds and trees of green chip, might be more aptly interpreted into change of scene.

Already, her good old friend had conferred upon her the favour of securing her sick-bed from importunate visits, by a prohibition of company; and now, also at her request, he had suggested a short sojourn in town. Not for the purpose of mingling in its gay resorts. She was still unequal to the smallest exertion. But it was indispensable to her recovery to escape from Northover and Heckington, with all their withering associations.

Inconceivable had been the torment of that gentle mind, since the commencement of the year. Not from vexation at the calumny said by her friend Amy to have attached itself to her name; not from fear of the paltry malignity of a Mrs. Horsford, — the spiteful hints of a Mrs. William Hartland, — the sudden reserve of a Lady Frere', — or the silly twitter and cackle of a large and gossiping neighbourhood. — She had patience for all this. — She had fortitude for all these. — She could even bear to think that a woman so fallen as Florence Rawdon, accused her of base and unwomanly treachery.

But what she could *not* bear were her own self-reproaches. The warning reluctantly, almost unintentionally given by Lady Higham, had sufficed to —

Turn her eyes into her very soul;
And there, she found such black and grained spots,

as caused her to shudder at herself. The wanderer in Eastern lands who discovers a Cobra coiled under his pillow, could not be more horror-struck! —

Till that startling explanation with Amy, never had it occurred to her mind that her affection for Arthur Rawdon was of other than a cousinly nature. As soon would she have mistrusted her filial devotion to her father, or her sisterly love for Alfred and Edgar! —

But the sudden thrill which shot through her frame on hearing it asserted that he was passionately attached to *her*, that he had loved her at the time of his marriage and loved her still, had, by an electric shock, enlightened her mind. She could not doubt that her delight in finding the coldness of deportment from which she had so bitterly suffered, was assumed, (assumed either to screen her from the jealousy of Florence, or at the suggestion of duty and principle,) was in itself a crime.

That she should have been walking all this time unsuspectingly on the brink of an abyss, was a terrible discovery. Like the man who died of panic on seeing by daylight, the broken bridge over which he had ridden securely in the dark, she fell ill from pure consternation.

To mistrust herself, to fear that she should be unable to wrestle with and cast forth the fearful serpent which had crept into her quiet cradle, had not even a momentary share in her uneasiness. But how was she to forgive herself the severity of her judgment against Florence? —

The Scripture exhortation — “let him who is without sin among you first cast a stone at her,” assumed a terrible significance in her ears. Was *she* without sin? — Though, thanks to wholesome rearing, and the absence of evil precept or ill example, her character was stainless and conduct pure, was her heart without blemish — her mind without a shadow, — her conscience without a voice of accusation? —

What moment of her life, for two years past, had not been occupied with the thought of Arthur; — solitude for his welfare, — care for his interests, — love for his children — for himself.

She saw it with agonising clearness; and all that remained for her, now that the scales had fallen from her eyes, was to secure herself from evil to come.

But to “walk circumspectly, not as fools but as wise,” is not an easy task, so long as we are submitted to the authority of the foolish. If the irregularities of private life would sometimes reconcile us to the exercise of the “paternal despotism” of the *lettre de cachet*, a case like Sophia Corbet’s almost justifies the Confessional, with its instructions, prohibitions, and penances of stone-

ment. — How sadly, poor girl, did she need a spiritual director!

It was something, however, that she was sure of a friend.

"You wrote me word, my dear child, that you were coming 'here for the recovery of your health," said Lucretia Rawdon, as they sat together beside the tea-table in Hertford Street, the first evening of her arrival. "But you won't bring colour into your cheeks, by sobbing over the fire. You must rouse up your spirits, Tiny, before you've a chance of getting health into your bones."

"On the contrary, dear cousin. Perfect quiet will be my best restorative."

"So fancy most young girls, when crossed in love; — so say all of them. — So said I, myself, Tiny, when fretting my soul out at sixteen, at having been thrown over by your grandfather. If, instead of allowing me to mope away my next ten years because I professed to prefer 'a quiet life,' I had been whipped and spurred into the pursuits and diversions befitting my age, who knows but I might have lived to become a happy grandmother myself, instead of a cross-patch old maid."

"But I am not crossed in love, dear cousin Lucretia. I have not been thrown over. Write, if you like, and ascertain from Dr. Ashe whether I am not seriously indisposed."

"No, no! — not with a goodly

khous illness, my dear. And I've no patience with cream-laid, electrotyped things they call 'indisposi- s.' When mincing-mouthed folks tell me their 'ma- is on the mind,' I long to give their mind a good te, and disencumber it. Minds were made for better poses, Tiny, than to nourish young lady's whimsies. — ve *them* to such Misses as the Horsfords: a Rawdon Heckington ought to be above fid-fad! — Come, d! — Speak out! — Who's been vexing you? — at's the matter?" —

Poor Tiny was silenced. She had arrived in town, lute and courageous. "If thine eye offend thee, pluck ut," was to be the rule of her conduct. But this ic effort was far easier to accomplish, than to bear . the officiousness of poor Lucretia — turning up eyelid to search for a mote, after the prying familiar ion of my uncle 'Toby and the widow Wadman.

'Only grant me a week's reprieve," said she, writhing tle under the attack, "and I promise you not to bore with either nerves or reserves. After that respite, ill listen to you, dear cousin, and you shall listen e. But in the interim, spare me all talk of either family or myself. Let us forget Heckington and hover. Let us forget the very name of Rawdon.

to me, cousin Lucretia, about things millions of s from Hertfordshire: — Arctic Expeditions, — ntic Cables, — Crystal Palaces, — Great Leviathana. nything but home."

"Poor soul — poor dear soul! — Just what I felt and said myself, after reading William Enmore's marriage in the Whitehall Chronicle!" muttered Lucretia, as, after sealing the compact with a kiss, she stole out of the room to issue orders that the beef-tea, which she periodically inflicted on her invalid, might be of XXX quintessence. "Well, well, — no great harm can come of letting things alone."

She did, therefore, what was wisest to be done: asked no questions — gave no advice. — But while Miss Corbet sheltered herself from the visits of even Lady Higham and Lady Frere under the sacred plea of "Not at home," provided for her, from the nearest library, heaps of popular books; and abstained from remarking, when occasionally visiting her sitting-room, whether they betrayed signs of being read; whether the pages were still uncut, or the reading mark a permanent fixture.

At length, the period of probation wore to a close, and a new week made its appearance; not more pointedly announced by the half-dozen thin account-books in roan-covers, placed on the old lady's table, — what Bob Horsford was wont to call the Monday Budget of the Provisional Government, — than by the determination perceptible "under the shadow of the even-brows" of Placidia.

"*Well*, my dear?" — said Lucretia, with an unflinching look of inquiry, as if screwing the question

with a gimlet into the very heart of her companion, —
“what have you to tell me?”

“Let me first inquire,” replied her victim, with a slight degree of tremulousness in her voice, “whether you are prepared to prove your good will by granting me the greatest favour in the world?”

Convinced that she was about to implore a further reprieve, Lucretia’s countenance grew grim and negative.

“Not I! — Out with your confession at once, Tiny!” she sharply replied. “Beating about the bush only wastes time and patience.”

“In one word, then, will you pay me your summer-visit this year at Fredville, instead of Northover? — Will you accompany me, dear cousin Lucretia, to the West Indies?”

The old lady started from her chair, — her prim bandeaux almost standing on end, but less from surprise than satisfaction. No proposal in the world could have yielded her half such delight. Fond of change and novelty, her contracted income confined her to her dull home; and so decided a proof of Tiny’s confidence in her affection, went straight to her heart.

After a glance round her stuffy breakfast-room which comprehended the glass jars of entomological rarities — but whether to express her regret at having to abandon these lares and penates of Hertford Street, or her glee at the prospect of beholding them in vital and venomous vigour, were hard to say, — she crushed the feeble

fingers of poor Placidia between her bony hands with fervid cordiality, as she exclaimed — “All over the world with you, Tiny! — Whenever and wherever you like!”

This was indeed full and most satisfactory acquiescence; for poor Tiny had prepared herself for endless questioning, and interminable remonstrances.

“Nothing I’m so fond of, my dear, as a sea-voyage,” continued the elated spinster, whose closest acquaintance with the unruly element had been made in a Margate wherry. “I’ve wanted all my life to see Jamaica; and five-and-twenty years ago, it was a great mortification to me that Cousin Jane never vouchsafed me an invitation. But when are we to start, Tiny? — And who and what am I to take with me?”

“All and everything likely to conduce to your comfort,” replied her gratified kinswoman. — “I wish to start by the mail which sails three weeks hence, if not inconvenient to you. My friend, Mr. Harman, of Bedford Square, will make all our arrangements.”

“And your father, my dear?” —

“I ought, perhaps, to have told you before I obtained your consent to accompany me, that I have not yet asked for his to my departure.”

Lucretia muttered a reply not altogether audible in the gallery. The old lady knew she ought not to say — “You are of age, my dear, — what does it signify?” — But at the bottom of her prejudiced heart

that a scion of the Rawdons of Heckington owed only a modified amount of filial duty to Henry Corbet, the yeoman's son.

"I hope and believe you have confidence in me, cousin Lucretia," added Tiny; "and I therefore tell you frankly that my expedition to Jamaica must not be, at present, known to any one but yourself. When I am gone, my friends and relatives will learn that Dr. Ashe considers a warmer climate than Hertfordshire indispensable for my health, and that instead of proceeding to Hyères or Cannes, I prefer visiting my West Indian estates."

"But you *have* other motives, Tiny?" —

"Other very serious motives, which at some future time I will reveal to you."

"I am satisfied, my dear child. At present, I will ask you nothing more."

"On the eve of departure I shall take leave of my father and brothers, — not sooner. The interview might shake my resolution, and perhaps inspire my father with a wish to accompany us, which would wholly unsettle my plans."

"Were you a less sensible girl, or a less good one, I might think it my duty to remonstrate, and question, and bother you. I don't! — You are quite equal to manage your own matters in your own way. Or if I wanted an excuse for complying with your wishes, I *might* plead my obligations to the Cousin Willy who

loved you so dearly, or the Aunt Jane who died because she could not have you for a daughter-in-law. But I never was one of the Goody Plausibles, Ting. I don't love you for *their* sakes, but your own; and am content to go with you to the world's end, and live and die with you, so you'll only love me a little in return and bear with my queerness."

Something so nearly resembling a sob burst from the bosom of poor old Lucretia, and something so nearly resembling a tear fell from her withered cheek on that of Miss Corbet, as she gratefully and affectionately embraced her, that the invalid was unspeakably touched.

If she should only succeed half as well in reconciling her father to the step she was about to take, all would be well.

Yet the arguments she had to use with him concerning the eligibility of her departure, were almost as cogent as those by which she had convinced herself. If she had promised Mrs. Corbet on her death-bed never to leave him, but preside over his household-welfare and that of her brothers, this promise had been fully kept so long as the boyhood of Alfred claimed her personal superintendence. But the poverty and discomfort originating the anxieties of her dying stepmother, had ceased to disorganise the family. Their establishment was now so taught and trained, that it might, without castors during her absence; and for her father, Northover abruptly, to the injury of his

before the education of the boys was complete, was a step certain to suggest to the neighbourhood that there was a rupture between the Rawdons and Corbets, and leave to their evil interpretation the assignment of a cause.

She entertained little doubt, however, of obtaining his consent, and even approval, if not asked so soon as to leave him time for recantation: the fiat of poor old Dr. Ashe being still as potent at Northover, as it had ever been at Grenfield House.

CHAPTER XVIII.

THE captive lion in the fable was released from the toils of the hunter, by a mouse; and the best-concocted plans and stratagems are often defeated by agents equally insignificant.

One day, nearly three weeks after Miss Corbet's arrival in town, while, during the absence of the old lady for the purpose of undergoing her daily "constitutional" in the Apsley Gardens, where she trotted to and fro with the ferocious activity of a wolf in its den, Tiny sat carefully copying at the writing-table certain household-lists, indispensable for the guidance of her father during her absence from England, the door was thrown open by Lucretia's exiguous footman; who, with as scared a look as that of his predecessor when drawing the curtains of King Priam at dead of night, abruptly announced — "LADY BROOKDALE!"

Tiny was inexpressibly disconcerted. She had hitherto managed to secure herself against all intrusion of visitors; and Lord Higham's sister was one of the last persons she wished to see.

At all times dull, methodical, and monotonous as a sheet of ruled paper, the philosophic manner in which, *shortly* after their first acquaintance at Higham Grange,

the courtier-lady had resigned herself to the loss of the Harrow schoolboy whose death rendered Victoria Barnewall an heiress, completed the aversion of Miss Corbet; a dislike all the greater for the family likeness borne by Lady Brookdale to her excellent and highminded brother; reminding her of those paltry Cologne flacons which are modelled into statuettes of Napoleon the Great.

The stripling footman, however, viewed with other eyes the lady who arrived in a royal carriage, which, having brought home Lord Brookdale from some court or levée, she had feloniously appropriated for half an hour to her own use; and which, at the homely door of his mistress, created as much sensation as it would have done in some silent street in Pompeii, or as if, in place of a pair of screws, a lion and unicorn pranced in its harness. To close the door against a ladyship so conveyed, would be, he fancied, an act of Petty Treason.

But, however startled by the visit, Tiny could hardly repress a smile at the air of fastidious disgust with which Lady Brookdale, in seating herself, glanced round the shabby room; the furniture of which, as well as of every other in the house, Lucretia had for a fortnight past been clothing in patchwork-suits of holland, baize, and muslin; to preserve its tarnished gilding and cloudy varnish from further deterioration during her absence.

"My dear Miss Corbet, you see me in a state of the utmost consternation!" began the visitor, her lacklustre eyes and stony face exhibiting at the same time the most

lifeless immobility. — “I have just heard of your approaching departure for the West Indies!” —

As Lady Brookdale had expressed the same exaggerated surprise when she declined being presented Court and pushed forward in the world, poor Tiny waited patiently to learn in what way her comings or goings could move the feelings of the lady of the Lord Waiting. But Lady Brookdale's attention was again wandering to the tattered yellow gauze veiling the looking-glass, and the flannel bags swathing the legs of the Boule writing-table as if they were afflicted with gout. To shorten her scrutiny and the reverie to which it was giving rise, Miss Corbet proceeded to inquire whether she could execute any commission for her ladyship in the West Indies.

Lady Brookdale now fixed her eyes twice as wonderingly on the face of Miss Corbet, as she had previously done on the dismantled walls.

“*Commission?* — In the *West Indies?* — For *me?* — said she, with a degree of emphasis betraying some indignation. “Surely (having property, I believe, in the island) you must be aware that my brother-in-law, Lord Warwick, was consecrated, nearly two years ago, Bishop of Jamaica and the Bahamas?”

Tiny, whose correspondence with her agents was devoted to private and practical purposes, made so inarticulate a reply, that her visitor thought it necessary

add, "Being the fourth, in precedence, of the Colonial Bishoprics."

But her expectation that Miss Corbet would instantly entreat an introductory letter of recommendation to the fourth member of the Colonial Hierarchy, was signally disappointed. — Tiny waited silently for further information.

"The fact is," resumed her ladyship, "that I am just come from my sister, Mrs. Warwick, who, having been detained in England by urgent private affairs, proceeds to Jamaica by the next mail. It was thus I became acquainted with your intended departure."

"I own I was curious to learn how so insignificant a matter could have transpired," observed Miss Corbet; "for I have endeavoured to spare some anxiety to my friends, by forbearing to announce my departure."

"Simply thus. My sister, on sending somewhat late to engage cabins in the *Lightning* for herself and children, was informed that the two best had been long engaged by Messrs. Harman and Wrottesley, of Bedford Square; and immediately wrote to them, stating who she was, and requesting, of course, that the cabins might be given up to her. This they very uncivilly declined, on pretence that they were bespoken for a lady."

Perceiving that Miss Corbet made no movement of surprise, disapproval, or apology, Lord Higham's wooden effigy curtly added, "I must say that Maria has my *brother to thank* for having been subjected to such

marked disrespect. He ought to have obtained a passage for the family of the Bishop of Jamaica in a Man-of-War, or steam-frigate. In such emergencies, the Admiralty is always courteous and serviceable."

"It may not yet be too late for such an arrangement," suggested Tiny.

"You don't know my brother. He never asks for anything, — least of all for a member of his own family. Besides, it is now unnecessary; for of course, on learning that *you* were the lady who had secured the best accommodation, I hastened to assure my sister, in your name, that you would be most happy to give them up to her."

"I regret that I cannot confirm the concession," said Miss Corbet, resolved to resist a proposition so almost coercive. "I was careful to secure the airiest cabin in the *Lightning*, because I have been suffering from severe illness; and the friend who is kind enough to undertake the care of me, must enjoy the best accommodation."

"Do you allude to the old Miss Rawdon, to whom this house belongs?" demanded Lady Brookdale, using her double eyeglass for a second and more scornful survey of the decrepid furniture.

"The greater part of our baggage is already installed," added Tiny, after an affirmative bow. "The cabins were selected for me on account of the communication between them: — the only respect in which they differ from the rest."

"The very reason which renders it indispensable they should be assigned to my sister and her children!" persisted Lady Brookdale, evidently expecting the client of Messrs. Harman and Wrottesley to prove as subservient as she had formerly found the Bradden-Branshaws and Ommanys. "Of course you will not hesitate to oblige a person in Mrs. Warwick's influential position, whose notice of you in Jamaica may, I must be permitted to say, prove of the greatest advantage."

Miss Corbet was becoming too much amused to be angry.

"I have led a homely and home-staying life in England," she replied. "I shall live at Fredville in the same quiet obscurity; so that patronage of any kind would be thrown away upon me. I do not even take letters to the Governor, Lord Ormadale, — though brother to one of the kindest of my Hertfordshire neighbours. I have only to regret that my convenience should interfere with that of Mrs. Warwick."

"All that remains for me, then, is to appeal to my brother's interference," said Lady Brookdale, rising perpendicularly from her chair, and preparing for departure.

But if Miss Corbet's resistance had created any illwill towards her in her ladyship's narrow mind, it must have received ample gratification in the painful change of feature and deportment, which, at that moment, seemed to convert her into stone.

Nor did Arthur Rawdon, the unexpected visitor

whose sudden appearance had produced this transformation, seem to be less agitated.

The room into which he was intruding, in early boyhood his own study, had witnessed that sad interview with his cousin after poor Willy's death, the incidents of which were only too grievously imprinted in his memory.

No sooner had the door closed behind the retreating Lady Brookdale, and the carriage driven away which, standing at the door left open in honour of the Royal attendants admitted into the hall, had facilitated the entrance previously denied him, — than he hurried towards Tiny, and seized into his own her trembling hands.

“What is all this?” — cried he, in a voice she could scarcely recognise as that of her cousin. “Where are you going, Tiny? — Why are you about to desert me?”

As not a word of reply was uttered by the terrified girl, who had sunk unnerved into a chair, Arthur Rawdon continued to pour forth his incoherent remonstrances.

Throughout her illness, throughout her convalescence, he told her, he had heard from Dr. Ashe, who was also attending one of his children, such tidings of her health as in some degree relieved his anxieties; till eventually, on learning that she had established herself in town

with their cousin Lucretia, for change of air, he was tranquil.

But alas! the preceding day, an accidental encounter in the village with Susan Moore, who, as a faithful old servant of the family, he invariably honoured with a passing word, had given rise to the misgivings he now sought to enlighten. The good woman, privately engaged to accompany her former nursling to Jamaica, had, with the usual density of her class, so refined upon the discretion required of her, as to be worse than indiscreet. Her entreaties to Master Arthur "not to suppose that Miss Sophia was going away for good, to the Ingies, but only to look after her affairs a bit," afforded his first insight into the projects of his cousin.

Deny them she did not — deny them she *could* not; and she was consequently exposed to upbraidings and expostulations against which it was indeed distressing to contend.

"You to abandon me!" cried he. — "You, to whom I owe my miserable destiny, — my utter desolation! — And for what? — To increase a fortune already far more than sufficient for your wants, — to grind out of those wretched blacks of Fredville, money to hoard! — You don't spend half your income, Tiny. Yet you leave me — leave your old father, — your young brothers, — your decent happy home, — only to supervise your mills and engines, lest the Harmans should wrong you of a *few miserable pounds!*"

"It is true, I do not expect she. "But, remember, Arth interest in the property; and alone have I been enabled from whom it is derived. V I have re-established the Almshouses at Fredville and Hurtsfield, Infirmaries have been built natural I should wish to see

"Schoolhouses! — Almshouses her cousin, — almost choke you weigh the benefits thus against the deep, deep bitter affliction on one whose very nature is to own? I have not deserved it as you have made me, have devoted to you heart and soul

being abiding so near you, whose life was worse than death."

Poor Tiny's respiration became short and troubled; and a feverish flush mounted to her cheek. But she had the courage not to interrupt him.

"When I first returned from the Continent," he continued, "I knew that jealous eyes were upon me. Florence, who — whatever else may be her faults, — is fondly attached to her husband" —

Impossible for Miss Corbet to repress a start of surprise. — Was Arthur sincere in this declaration? — Was Lady Higham deceived? — Or was he only endeavouring to startle her into candour for the certification of his own suspicions? —

"Poor Florence," he continued, "had sometimes taunted me, while we were abroad, with my attachment to 'Placidia;' and knowing that at any moment an incautious glance or word might excite her violent temper, I carefully absented myself from Heckington. That unsatisfactory spring in London — that tedious autumn on the Moors, — had no other object or purpose. To spend the winter in Paris, I was at that time determined."

"Then why object to *my* departure from England," said Miss Corbet, faintly, "which merely carries out your own intentions?"

"The time is past, Tiny, when such precautions were necessary. When we were together in November at *Higham Grange*, my wife spoke frankly to me on the

how could she be otherwise

Poor Tiny literally from blindness, and the triumph that Amy should have so much buting to jealousy of her sin in truth from anxiety concern of herself, was indeed unacco

Still greater surprises aw

"Before the departure fr
Marsham," resumed Arthur,
the hearth-rug, near her ch
chimney-piece, and his eyes
face, "he endeavoured, I kn
which he had probably disc
with us at Rome. — Probab
your rejection of his suit."

"May not Mrs. Rawden's

"By the time I return to England," said Miss Corbet — scarcely venturing to meet his eyes while he made this assertion, "all these wretched misunderstandings will be at rest. When I am gone, there will be less chance of domestic storms at Heckington."

"By Heavens, Tiny, the atmosphere of this house is rendering you as cold, callous, and calculating as it did my mother!" cried he, with re-awakened irritation. "Can you talk of your departure thus coolly, as you would of the straying of your lap-dog? — When you are gone, to whom am I to turn for sympathy in the cares of life, — for encouragement in my occupations and aspirations, — or comfort in my distresses? Is it to the idle, thriftless, frivolous, ignorant wife you advised me to marry; or to her silly associates, and artful mother? — *Who* will train my neglected children, — who will preside over the welfare of my poor tenants? —"

"Yet when at Northover, Arthur, how little, how *very* little communication passed between us!" —

"There may be companionship without a word spoken. — Every hour of the day, your presence so near me was a blessing to me, in the good order of Heckington, — the education of the young, — the solace of the old. — Never did I return home without deviating from my path by the way, for a glimpse of Northover. That you lived there, — so near me, — safe and happy, — was enough. In winter, the light of your lamp gleaming through the crimson curtains of

your studio, told me you were sitting there, employed in womanly pursuits, surrounded by reminiscences of me and mine; and, comforted by that thought, I arrived at my forlorn fireside cheered and forbearing." — He was forced to pause for a moment, to dash away the tears gathering under his swollen eyelids.

"But what shall I do henceforward, Tiny, when poor deserted Northover greets me from a distance, and I know that all is cold and desolate under its roof! — Your father is a just man, — a good friend and a good tenant, — but no companion. — With Alfred and Edgar I have forborne, because they were your brothers. But who will mediate now in their perpetual quarrels with my keepers? — *You* have been the guardian angel of the house and its inmates. — Henceforth, all will be misery and ruin!"

"Do you assign *no* value then to the claims of duty?" faltered his agitated cousin. "Are you conscious of owing nothing to the name you bear, — the fortune you inherit, — the children who will some day represent you in this world, — the soul for which you are responsible to God?"

"Quote Watts's Hymns to me at once, Tiny, as you do to Evvy!" — cried the exasperated man. "Say to me, as you some day will to Tuddy's baby, that to be good is to be happy. '*Happy!*'" cried he, almost fiercely, 'HAPPY!'" —

Then bursting into a ghastly laugh, and clasping his

hands upon his forehead, he began to pace the dismantled room, as if overmastered by his despair. Nor was it possible for the dismayed Sophia Corbet longer to restrain her tears.

But if they relieved her overcharged feelings, they did not unnerve her resolution. Specious as was the arguing of her cousin, and fervid his appeal, they could not remove the landmarks of right and wrong established in her conscience.

"Take pity on us, Tiny!" — gasped the distracted man, suspending his irregular steps and throwing himself at her feet "Take pity on me and my children. — Do not abandon us, — oh, do not — do not abandon us!" And throwing aside all reticence and reserve, he lifted up his voice, and wept.

It was only while endeavouring to stifle his sobs in the heavy folds of her dress, that he suddenly perceived the cause of her seeming insensibility. She had fainted. Nature had relieved her from the anguish of that terrible struggle.

No need to summon assistance for her restoration. Lucretia Rawdon, opportunely returning at that moment from her walk, entered the room — full of kindly and thoughtful activity. But before their mutual aid re-restored poor Sophia to the full use of her faculties, she insisted upon the departure of her cousin.

"Go Arthur! —" said she, — "Away with you at once. — You have done harm enough already."

CHAPTER XIX.

THE first stroke of the paddle-wheels placing a chasm between the passengers in the *Lightning* and their native shore, — a moment usually trying to the compassions of a sea voyager, — afforded to poor Tiny the first sensation of comfort she had experienced for many weeks past.

A severe relapse of illness had reduced her to such a state of weakness, that even Dr. Ashe, summoned to Hertford Street from Hitchin to attend her, admitted there might be danger in her immediate removal.

But the stout-hearted Lucretia was warmly enlisted in her cause; and *her* mind was of too vigorous a nature to be alarmed by prognostics. From the moment Tiny murmured to her — “If I am too weak to walk, let me be lifted into the railway carriage and steamer; — the welfare of my future life depends on my departure,” the staunch spinster resolved that a contrary fiat from the united College of Physicians should not be her hindrance.

From Henry Corbet, the project of his daughter encountered fewer obstacles than she had anticipated. He was one of those matter-of-fact individuals who, where *health* or fortune were in question, regarded sentiment

as a feather in the scale. Dr. Ashe had decided that his daughter required a warmer climate, to a warmer climate she must go. If the Fredville agent wrote word that it was indispensable for her interest to visit Fredville, Fredville must be visited. To part from her was a sore trial; but he was thankful for the care with which she had placed his household matters in train to spare him trouble during her absence; and promised that, between Alfred's quitting Eton and being entered at Cambridge, he should pay a long visit to his sister.

If her health did not improve, and she wished to see himself, he would at once hurry over to her in person.

But, having escorted her to Hythe on the Southampton Water, in whose offing the Lightning, with Blue Peter hoisted, lay awaiting her mails, and seen her carried from the shoreboat up the vessel's side and laid insensible in her berth, after which, standing on the little pier, he joined heartily in the cheer which greeted the departing steamer, — he returned to the Dolphin Hotel; depressed perhaps a little in demeanour, but with an excellent appetite. This, he forthwith appeased with mulligatawny and a Hamble lobster; and returned home that night, neither a sadder nor a wiser man, though with a considerable stress on his digestion.

Yet for his poor daughter, even the hard-headed Lucretia was becoming seriously alarmed. Instead of *being revived by the sea-breezes*, as predicted by the

good old Doctor so familiar with her constitution, she grew daily weaker and weaker. Even her powers of mind seemed failing. She scarcely recognised her cousin or Susan Moore, by both of whom she was tenderly watched over. She seldom spoke, — never unclosed her eyes. The powers of life seemed waning, one by one.

Nevertheless, deplorable as was her condition, it did not secure her from the vindictive retaliations of the Bishop's-lady. Her brother having declined to interfere in a dilemma in which he could exercise no authority, and where his personal leaning was wholly to the side of her victim, she did not hesitate to wreak on the poor invalid the bitterness of her acrid nature.

The "children" of Mrs. Warwick, of whom Lady Brookdale had spoken so pathetically as requiring the closest umbrage of a mother's wing, were in fact two growing girls of fourteen and fifteen, much resembling the lanky wooden dolls manufactured by Swiss peasants, to be fantastically dressed by those English young ladies who work their way to Heaven through the rag-fair of Charity-bazaars.

But as if to complete their want of charm, Albertina and Alexandrina Warwick were under the care of the identical Miss Strickney, whom the release from school-room bondage of Victoria Barnewall had enabled to transfer her valuable services to another branch of the family. The model-governess retained all her powers to be disagreeable and disagreeable-making; but it would

be unfair to condemn the crabbedness of her ways or judgment. To foster the first tender shoots of spring, Providence tempers the wind, and sends sunshine in due season; but when November's nipping frosts arrive, the plants have become hardy. It is too much, therefore, to expect of governess nature to remain soft and propitious throughout life's long year, in order to cherish an endless succession of tender shoots; and, after being stultified by cramming the ears of one generation with grammar and geography, (rudiments of polite learning which it is good to possess but as harassing to impart as to acquire,) recommence the same ungrateful monotony of toil; — from Barbauld's Hymns inserted into the infant mind by pin's point, to Alison's History of England, administered under chloroform.

At forty-eight, and with a bilious constitution, Miss Strickney was not likely to be over-indulgent. In virtue of the consanguinity of her two dull pupils with a mitre, she felt, indeed, that it became her to be doubly rigorous. But Lucretia Rawdon, though a friend to discipline of all kinds, denied that it was training a bishop's daughters in the way they should go, or inculcating the Christian precept to love their neighbour as themselves, to force them into warfare with their fellow creatures, by firing platoons of Mendelssohn *à quatre mains*, from one of Erard's loudest piano-fortes, at six o'clock every morning, in the public saloon adjoining Miss Corbet's cabin, just as the poor invalid was beginning to close her eyes.

Lucretia remonstrated — first by word of note — then by word of mouth; — leaving some advantage in the hands of the governess in orthography, in the first instance — the vernacular, in the last. Sore waxed the strife between the two irate spinsters; and when the Bishop's lady was appealed to, she moved for a Rule in a Higher Court; and as herself and her "young family" had been especially placed by his employers, the W. I. Mail Company, under the protection of the captain, he decided that the Mendelssohn platoons should explode as punctually and unremittingly as the morning gun.

A spirit heroic as the classic name she bore, was roused by this decree in the bosom of Lucretia. Instead of following the example of her antagonist, and rendering the cabin meals a penance to the other passengers by spiteful hints or insolent retorts, she surreptitiously borrowed a pair of pincers of the ship's carpenter; stole into the saloon at dead of night while the enemy was sound asleep; and away went the strings of the piano, wire after wire, resonant as a running fire of one of Edgar Corbet's miniature batteries! —

"Let the Captain rebuke me publicly, if he dare. Let him mulct me privately, in whatever amount of damages he thinks proper," croaked Lucretia. "I was not going to have my poor sick girl stunned out of her life by the ding-dong of those two wooden Misses."

The outrage thus defiantly committed, having afforded relief to other ears than those of poor Sophia

Corbet, it elicited more mirth than indignation; and one or two among the passengers, to whom the lady of an English Bishop was not, *vu les circonstances*, altogether as much an object of reverence as in Catholic countries the mother of the Pope, took occasion privately to express their gratitude.

But the ill-feeling previously cherished by Mrs. Warwick against Sophia Corbet, was materially aggravated by the incident; nor were her feelings mollified by even the medical report current on board, that, unless some unexpected change occurred in her symptoms, the young lady of Fredville would scarcely survive to reach her possessions and be laid in the family mausoleum of the Enmores.

The very crew, — less in remembrance of the liberality with which they had been remunerated for bringing the sick young lady on board, than of the lovely face and slender form of their inanimate burthen, walked lighter over the state-cabins and did their spiriting more gently, when they heard it predicted that their next duty towards their dying passenger would probably be to lower her body into the deep.

Meanwhile, the turmoil and clatter of the London season, where people come and go unheeded, whether from country to town, or from life to death, was renewing its usual demonstrations of forged vivacity. In Belgravia, no one notes who drops into the grave, except with reference to the property, place, or Garter he leav

behind; and even Sir Index would have found little to interleave in his favourite book, or circumstantiate in his plausible gossip, concerning the decease of Sophia Corbet.

- Of the official circle in which she had moved, the members were struggling and striving after the desires of their own hearts; attempting to make a figure in life by giving dinners which nobody cared to eat to people whom nobody cared to meet; moving mountains to accomplish the small object of being elbowed for a moment by the motley crowd of some fashionable soirée, where their presence was wholly unnoticed except by the reporter of the Morning Post.

For amidst wars and rumours of wars, — plague, pestilence, or famine, — decent deaths of venerated sovereigns or lawless assassination of law-perverting usurpers, — still whiffles on, unawed, the little frivolous twitter of the coteries, and scarcely higher-minded jargon³ of political life: — recording with the same tripsome levity the ruin of nations or families; — capitulations of conscience on the part of the lofty, or vulgar errors on the part of the low.

Few modern flowers of Rhetoric have been oftener quoted than Macaulay's Zealander, standing beside London Bridge to contemplate the ruins of London. But surely the reflections attributed to the Civilised Savage, at such a moment, would be far exceeded by the wonder of the tattooed New Zealander of to-day, if introduced into the heat, glare, and crush of a Belgravian drum; and told

that the incoherent sentences he hears uttered or shrieked under stress of torment, — accompanied by the giggle and simper of distressed beauty, or flushed faces and exuding brows of men asphyxiated out of the use of their faculties, — is to be accepted as a specimen of the highest order of entertainment of one of the most refined and intellectual of European nations.

Yet to the “fortuitous concourse of fashionable atoms,” such scenes are Elysium. Lady Frere who, with scarcely consequence for one, had undertaken to establish her newly-married sister Mrs. Victor Ommamy, — whose label of privilege in fashionable society consisted in a diamond necklace and tiara, which, if they passed for Golconda at Fair Oak, and the county balls of its neighbourhood, twinkled only as stars of the tenth magnitude in the brilliant galaxy of May Fair.

The self-satisfied good humour of both sisters, however, arising partly from their emancipation from provincial life, and partly from total want of the sensibility which renders people fastidious and peevish, bespoke indulgence for their insignificance. People grew accustomed to the announcement of their names, the sight of their faces and sound of their voices, as to the quadrilles of Laurent’s Orchestra, or the ices of Gunter; and in the orchid-house-atmosphere of ministerial Soirées, amidst a confusion of tongues capable of deafening an artilleryman or the keeper of a ménagerie, the two sisters, — the *most rising nobodies* of the day, — might be heard sym

pathising cheerfully with Lady Brookdale concerning the annoyance likely to arise to poor Mrs. Warwick, from the death of her fellow-passenger in the Lightning! —

“I have always imagined,” lisped little Mrs. Ommany, intently endeavouring, as she spoke, to catch the eye of a distant duchess, from whom she craved the small charity of a frigid bow, — “I have always imagined that a funeral at sea must be one of the most melancholy spectacles in the world! — Such striking pictures of it as one has seen! — Wilkie’s, for instance.”

“Such an event would certainly be vastly distressing to my sister and her young family,” assented Lady Brookdale. “And so rich as Miss Corbet is supposed to be, she ought certainly to have chartered a steamer for her own use, instead of molesting other people with her decease on board. The Rawdons, I conclude, succeed to her fortune?”

“Oh! dear, no! — A younger brother of her own; — nearly grown-up, and remarkably good-looking.”

With the instinctive greed of a chaperoning mother, Lady Brookdale effected a syncopic change from major to minor in the key of her voice, as she pathetically added — “I earnestly hope, however, that poor Miss Corbet is not past recovery. — Five thousand a year, if I remember?” —

“And one of the most amiable as well as pleasing persons in the world,” added Lady Frere, who was as *sincerely* interested in the state of Tiny’s health as was

compatible with her meagreness of soul. "Miss Corbet is my pleasantest Cleveland's neighbour, and would be a loss to me in every respect."

"What age is she, do you suppose?" inquired Lady Brookdale, carelessly.

"Quite young — certainly not above two-and-twenty," replied Mrs. Ommany, who being two years older, was disposed to suppress a year or two.

"Four-and-twenty, I should rather conceive," rejoined Lady Brookdale, mentally dating from their first meeting at Higham Grange.

"Here is a person who is sure to be accurate!" interposed Lady Frere. "My dear Sir Justin, — pray how old is our poor friend Miss Corbet?" —

"The West Indian heiress," added Mrs. Ommany, — fancying he looked puzzled: though he was only dissatisfied at being expected to supply dates for individuals non-existent in his favourite volume.

"Miss Corbet of Northover you mean?" he replied, not a little relieved. "Upon my word I can't exactly say. But I conceive that you will find her birth recorded about the 17th page of the 1st volume of Burke's 'Landed Gentry;' under the head of 'Rawdon of Heckington.' Her mother, if your ladyship remembers, was a Rawdon."

And he proceeded as carefully to compute the dates of certain marriages and births, as though he had been

an undertaker preparing the inscription for her coffin-plate.

"It don't much signify, as her days are so nearly done," interrupted Lady Brookdale, without the slightest inflection of pity in her metallic voice. And, proceeding to the refreshment-table, she revived exhausted nature with a congenial draught of iced lemonade.

A few days afterwards, occurred an event in that self-same *clique*, which, though of less importance to what is called the world in general than even the death of Sophia Corbet, plunged a happy household into affliction. The infant son of poor Lady Higham was seized with convulsions, and, in spite or in consequence of the attendance of half the doctors in London, expired.

Already harassed by the events of the autumn, by her father's precarious condition, and her brother's reckless proceedings, the courage of poor Amy gave way. For her, the world seemed suddenly at an end.

But this feeling of utter prostration so natural on the part of a bereaved young mother, and so sincerely shared by her husband, became ridiculous when simulated by the Freres and Brookdales and their *cetera*. Lady B., *née* Armstead, seemed to be of opinion that a Court Mourning ought to be gazetted for the Heir-apparent of Higham Grange; while Sir Barton appeared almost to regret that nature had never granted him a child, that his deportment after its loss might present a *facsimile* of the dignified grief of his Great Original.

Wonderful, how they all crowded the door in Park Lane; first, with "obliging inquiries," eventually, with hypocritical condolences. Every body proposed to go and sit with "poor dear Lady Higham, who must be so terribly overcome and low;" just as every body offered to "pay the last respect to the dead," by attending the funeral of a babe whose life and coffin were scarce a span long! — Those who could not presume to be thus deeply afflicted, were eager in the offer of their carriages, to grace the "mournful procession!"

They were right. — "A domestic affliction," cited in the House of Lords as the motive for postponing a motion of some consequence, previously announced by the noble lord at the head of the No-matter-what Department, — a "family bereavement," dignified by a kindly message on the part of Royalty itself, — was entitled to the very utmost sympathy.

The good and beautiful Sophia Corbet was but a Sophia Corbet: — the dead infant, an Honourable James Armstead, — a prematurely blighted Peer of the Realm! —

CHAPTER XX.

ALLUSION was made, in an earlier Chapter, to the sensations of relief experienced by Arthur Rawdon on escaping from cabin-durance in a mail-packet. It is easy to conceive how much greater the comfort afforded to a delicate and suffering woman, by finding herself once more on dry land, in a cheerful, spacious, and above all, tranquil habitation.

Though *his* passage had been a stormy one, and less as quiet as if performed on the wings of the dove on which she had so longed to "flee away and be at rest," exquisite was the delight of waking one pleasant spring-morning after a night of uneasy dreams, to find herself at Fredville, — Fredville fragrant with flowers, and bright with friendly faces.

For Tiny, in visiting Jamaica for the first time, came not to a land of strangers. Though the connection between Northover and Heckington has alone been placed before the reader, that between Northover and Fredville had been unremittingly kept up. From the moment of succeeding to the estate till the present overclouded day, Sophia Corbet had devoted her mind not only to comprehend and promote the interests of the property, but strictly to obey the behests of

farewell letter; — to “see that his poor people were mercifully dealt with; above all, that they were taught and civilised as well as clothed and fed.”

To insure this, till enfranchised from the engagement made with her stepmother, she had kept up the closest communication with the Harmans. Mary and Martha, as well as their father, were her diligent correspondents; and the Bedford Square family had been more than once her guests at Northover. It was even settled among them that, at one of those vague epochs called “some day or other,” which every hopeful human being keeps as a reserve for future happiness, the prim sisters should visit the unknown country whose tongue they spoke, and habit they wore, and revive their parched natures amidst the pleasant fields and beechen-shades of the county of Herts.

They had consequently come to think and dream of the young heiress as of a providential being; and to long for a sight of the fair face of that thoughtful kindly girl, who not only despatched to them liberal gifts of new books and new dresses, but to poor old purblind Remus a Bible, whose prodigious type was readable at ten yards’ distance, and to Aunt Aggy, his wife, gown-pieces that “took the shine out of the rainbow.”

Forced to admit that the Regulations for the St. Mark’s Almshouses forwarded to them by Miss Corbet were far more judicious than the Code previously established, what they admired still more was the gentle

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with the elated Mary and Martha Harman, in quest of entomological adventures.

The season of hot winds and dust-storms had set in. But they brought compensation in the shape of those wondrous fruits and flowers, gorgeous as in an Arabian tale, to which Tiny had been introduced in childhood by the florid descriptions of her Enmore playmates. As poor Willy had formerly desired — as Arthur had more recently hoped to witness — their cousin, as soon as she was sufficiently revived to crawl about the gardens in the cool dusk, or, in the shabby sociable of former days with the self-same venerable mules, proceed to survey the beautiful scenery of the neighbourhood arrayed in its highest glories of tropical vegetation, — was no less startled than gratified; even though poor Lucretia occasionally broke in upon her reveries with exclamations of “Just like Paul and Virginia!” — or “More beautiful than the crack scene in an Adelphi Easter-piece!”

The ecstasies of the old lady were not lessened by perceiving that change of air and scene began to exercise a beneficial influence on her companion. In spite of her customary roughness of speech, Lucretia had tenderly abstained from alluding to the motives of Tiny's self-exile, into which the Creole impetuosity of Arthur had afforded her some insight; and her affection for her young cousin being doubly and trebly enhanced by the *firmness of her self-government under circumstances so trying*, she silently watched every change of coun-

tenance, or accession of strength, that denoted returning health.

These were becoming daily more apparent. But it was not till poor Tiny felt sufficiently strong to dispense with the support of her sustaining arm, that, escorted only at a respectful distance by poor old grizzle-headed Remus, she made her way to the mango-grove so often described to her by the Enmores; where, more than under the roof of a Fredville, she had looked forward, throughout her voyage, to rejoining a friend. *There*, beside the old gates adorned with those emblems of mortality to her so unappalling, she recovered the use of tears so long denied her. — *There*, the self-sentenced exile wept, prayed, and was comforted.

On landing from the Lightning, the parting salutations of the Warwick family had been imbued with the sternest dignity; much resembling those of a plenipotentiary who has demanded his passports prior to a declaration of war. The Bishop's lady had made up her little mind to ignore the great heiress into utter annihilation.

As naturalists seem to fancy that their microscopes confer the faculties of existence on the animalculæ they discover and bring into notice, Mrs. Warwick evidently imagined that she possessed the power of extermination over all the blacks in the fourth colonial diocese, and a white or two, at discretion.

A very short sojourn in the island, however, demonstrated her error. She found in the contemned mite

of Fredville, an independent mite. Every colony can boast its aristocracy, — as, perhaps, can every ant-hill. The Enmore family were among the earliest settlers in Jamaica. From the days when St. Jago de la Vega ceased to be a Spanish possession, they had been giving magistrates to the town, and members to its councils. If the island possessed wealthier planters, it was because the proprietors of Fredville and Hurtsfield maintained a more liberal style of living, and contributed more largely to the public weal.

Even the Harmans, parasites of the parent tree, were influential and opulent people, members of the House of Assembly, and connected by marriage with the highest officials; and Dr. Warwick, who had on divers occasions availed himself of their support, lived in a spirit of Christian amity with every branch of a clan so respectable.

The worthy Bishop was, moreover, as became his high vocation, master of his own house. Certain masculine habiliments are said to be worn by the wives of hen-pecked husbands. Lawn sleeves should never be so degraded; and Bishop Warwick, a sensible as well as amiable man, retained the undivided autocracy of his mitre.

When, therefore, his lady apprised him of the internecine war carried on in the Lightning between his daughter's governess and the faithful duenna of Miss Corbet, he not only expressed his displeasure at Miss

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home, she made as many obliging inquiries, and left as many cards, as she fancied would ratify at sight a treaty of peace. She was even half inclined to push on to St. Marks, and glorify, by a personal call, the agent's daughters, the "Misses Harman." But so public a condescension it might be better to keep in reserve.

By this act of amnesty, Lucretia Rawdon was a little disappointed. Like other maiden ladies who have been uniformly railed off the lists of the tournament of life, she had become viciously covetous of combat; and the success of her skirmish on ship-board, had begotten an appetite for a new campaign.

Poor Miss Strickney, on the contrary, if equally bellicose at heart, was too well broken into the subordination of oppressed governessdom, not to lay down her arms without a murmur. At her first declaration of war, in the steamer, she was not aware that the young lady who had formerly attended to her wants at Higham Grange, was now wealthy enough to be entitled to set up an illness or affliction, on her own account. She resented only that Mrs. Warwick's admonitory snub was delivered to her in presence of the pupils in whose estimation it was her cue to be infallible; and dire was the fate of those over whom her tongue-scourging impended. Poor Albertina and Alexandrina, who had to submit that afternoon to a competitive examination of their parts of speech, — French, German, and Italian, *to say nothing of the vulgar tongue*, — did not inscribe

with white chalk in the kalendar, their mem. of the result.

Without extending her hand too far, Miss Corbet gracefully accepted the proffered olive branch. Towards a sister of Lord Higham, she was not disposed to be unrelenting; and, conscious that what passed with others for a *visit* to the West Indies, was in fact to be a residence, to last as many years as it should please the Almighty to assign her, she did not wish to embitter her inauguration by a feud with the family of her spiritual pastor, — a man so respectable and so respected as Bishop Warwick.

Though at present devoid of health or inclination for visiting of any kind, it was her object to render the life of her good old cousin as cheerful as was compatible with her own retiring habits; and she felt that, when Alfred arrived to visit her, the best society of Spanish Town ought to be available to the future heir of Fredville.

The growing intensity of the atmosphere, to others so oppressive, proved to the gentle invalid of the utmost advantage. The languid circulation of her blood became stimulated; and nature seemed to second her attempts at moral regeneration. She was endeavouring to get the better of herself; and such exertions usually prosper. What are called “insurmountable attachments” are simply those which people make no attempt to surmount.

Poor Tiny was too wise and too good to indulge in the fantastic tricks peculiar to sentimental martyrs.

She did not entreat Lucretia to abstain from all mention of the "one loved name;" or, when she discovered at Fredville a thousand scattered memorials of the childhood of Arthur Enmore — the manhood of Arthur Rawdon, — carefully remove them from sight. But she schooled herself to listen with composure to the anecdotes of her cousin constantly related by old Remus and the Harmans; and to contemplate the sketches he had made, and the corals, shells, and madrepores he had collected, as though they had belonged to any other member of the family. If not converted into fetishes, there was no danger in allowing them to keep their place.

In the expectation of news from England, consisted her severest trial. The eve of the mail's arriving at Fredville was now as agitating to Tiny, as it had ever been to Arthur Rawdon.

Luckily, however, her father, — at present her sole correspondent — was still too much engrossed by the precarious state of her health, to be communicative on other subjects. Of Alfred and Edgar indeed, he wrote. But it was almost in the same line and with the same degree of interest as of his prize ox, Thunderbolt, or a flock of Southdowns crossed with merino, for which he was in treaty. He even condescended to name her own poultry-yard, by a pathetic account of a fine brood of

speckled Hamburgs, devoured by a weasel; and a heavy complaint of Mary the dairymaid who had made an unjustifiable demand upon him for new strainers and milk-pails, and an increase of wages. But the name of "Rawdon" or of "Heckington" did not once occur in his three pages!

Lucretia's letter of advice, — not concerning the state of her live-stock, for, during her absence, not so much as a mouse was stirring in the Tower of Famine in Hertford Street, the liveliest sample of its natural history being the pickled snakes, — consisted in a communication from the gawky footman that the water-rate had been paid, and the gas-rate called for, three visiting cards left, and half a score of circulars; but no more mention of the Rawdons, in his despatch, than if they had emigrated to Melbourne.

Tiny did not wish to hear too much of them; but this total abstinence from the subject was almost alarming.

The following mail, however, brought news even less acceptable than silence. While Lucretia's domestic intelligence was increased only by a bulletin of assessed taxes, and several small accounts, Tiny was apprised by her father that the Freres, who had been spending Easter at Clevelands, were preparing a multitude of commissions to be executed by Alfred during his sojourn at Fredville; but that neither they nor any one else, had been received within the gates of Heckington. Illness

or ill-humour, hermetically closed the door. The Rawdons apparently loved each other too much, or too little, to care for the society of other people.

Such of their country-neighbours as had not at command, like the Freres, the higher entertainments of London life, thought it hard to be thus speedily exiled from the Paradise of which they had obtained only a temporary glimpse. Far harder would they have thought the exclusion, could they have surmised what was passing under the forbidden roof! —

In many, in perhaps *most* human natures, there lurks a cowardly instinct, which disposes people to sit watching in quiet security the terrible issue of hostile encounters. The ancients revelled in the conflicts of the arena where vigorous athletes were “butchered to make a Roman holiday,” or Christian virgins flung into the maw of beasts of prey; and in the days we live in, Spain, from its queen to its water-carriers, delights in the gory spectacle of the bull-fight.

Even in print, the “clang of hostile arms” is one of the surest appeals to public sympathy. From the conflicts of Homer and Virgil, down to those of Ariosto, Tasso, Spencer, — the fight of Balfour and Claverhouse, — of Lovelace and Colonel Morden, — descriptions of mortal combat hold us breathless. Nay, the paltry sham-fight between Richard and Richmond on the boards of a theatre, or between Lords Crasher and Slasher on Wimbledon Common, cannot be suppressed

without eliciting the groans of the gallery. Nay, the collision of two political thunder-clouds, such as Palmston and Russell, though the result might shake the peace of two hemispheres, is eagerly waited for by the vulgar.

But there are other antagonisms in social life, where keener eyes are privileged to witness and bitterer hearts to enjoy: — terrible, though unavowed struggles, silent deathstorms, the blackness of which is fearfully revealed by an occasional gleam of anger, lighting the ominous gloom; — such a domestic combat as preceded, for months, for years, the fatal catastrophe of the Duchesse of Praslin.

Even such an antagonism, arising out of one of the mismatches created by those hypocrisies of modern life which

Make marriage-vows as false as dicers' oaths,

was converting Heckington into a place of torment.

For a year past, from the period of their sojourn in Curzon Street, complete disunion had subsisted between the Rawdons. Whether the duper or the duped had been the first to establish the iron barrier between them mattered little, even to themselves. Some intolerant bitter word uttered by Florence had perhaps created an implacable resentment in the mind of her husband; for deeply-seated was his aversion, that, when at High Grange after her illness, she made overtures of reconciliation, they were utterly disdained.

As might be expected of her mother's daughter, cunning and artifice had been the arms employed by Mrs. Rawdon in carrying on her conjugal defence; and under cover of a crowd, they might have remained triumphant. With the Highams as powerful auxiliaries, with Tiny as an unsuspecting hostage, but above all, while her stately apartments were thronged with subservient guests, Florence could outwit or defy her husband.

But since the commencement of their sinister *tête-à-tête*, she had lost all courage, all power of self-defence; and, if, as we are entitled to believe, such frailties are registered in the Great Accompt, heavy must have been the responsibility incurred by Mrs. Horsford, every time that, in the lonely watches of the night, her unhappy daughter wished herself in the grave, — every time the guilty wife cursed the hour she was born! —

Mrs. William Hartland and other triflers of her class, were defrauded of the pleasing palpitation to be derived from witnessing her struggles, as they would have viewed through their opera-glasses the raging madness of Lear, or the more melodious ravings of Lucia di Lammermoor; and still less were they enabled to investigate the state of mind of her husband. Not being a magistrate, he was spared one personal tax on a country gentleman's ease and comfort; and remained free as Timon of Athens to shun the society of his prying neighbours. Instead of selecting the Queen's highway for his daily exercise,

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The only person whose
Arthur with an unacceptable
— spud in hand, or setter
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terms as those of the ladye
the old Scottish ballad —

“Madam, how doth my

And

“Ladye, how dot

“How’s the little chap g
and “What news do you rece
suitable answers, comprising t

A letter addressed to

"Our friend Ashe, who holds to the old-fashioned notion that all English children are the better for an annual dip in salt-water," added Henry Corbet, "tells me he advised the Rawdons that Evvy and the baby ought to bear her company. But either their father wouldn't spare them, or Mrs. Rawdon was of opinion that so large a party might be too much for the poor old Squire, whose life, for a year past, has been hanging on a thread. For she took herself off yesterday, accompanied only by her French maid, and Robert, who is to be sent back when she is settled. And now that he is relieved from the company of a nervous invalid, Arthur may perhaps become himself again, and a trifle more sociable."

By this intelligence, the anxieties of Placidia were set at rest. Though far from surmising the extent of the aversion existent between that ill-assorted couple, a careful retrospect of Lady Higham's revelations as well as of her cousin's manifestation of remorseful confidence in his wife, often caused her to shiver, even amidst the torrid atmosphere surrounding her.

At any moment, some unforeseen incident might bring to light what was already known to more than one person, and suspected by many; and who could foretell the degree of exasperation of an injured husband and father, of so fiery a temperament, that even to those he loved, his resentments were alarming!

Significant hints, which it had not always been

pressions occasionally -----

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Ormadales; and endure the st
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her lonely leisure at Fredville in inducting the agent's little girls into the mysteries of fancy-work.

Hailing with almost youthful glee every novelty that greeted her in what poor Willy used to call the land of green ginger and yellow fever, she was never weary of accompanying the maiden sisters to the Infant Schools of St. Marks; where the ludicrous woolly-pated "piccaninies" reminded her of the black-leather dolls of European toy-shops, — those pitfalls and quicksands of the London area-ocracy. She could hardly persuade herself, that nigger-life, — Abolition or no Abolition, — was not a joke; more especially as regarded first and second childhood, — its Topsy's and Remuses; and Mary and Martha had a hard matter to prevent the old lady from marring their scholastic discipline and creating rebellion against their Almshouse Regulations, by prodigal gratuities, such as would have fattened for a week her lean footman in May Fair.

It was at present settled that in the month of September, as soon as his harvests were garnered, and Alfred disenthralled from the "antique towers" always pleasantest to look at from afar, and whose "Henry's holy shade" is always most devoutly adored, retrospectively, — Henry Corbet and his son should hasten to Fredville. The latter, indeed, — in spite of the counter attraction of fox-hunting, and a still unfaded scarlet coat, — was to spend the winter with his sister. But *Northover* had claims upon her father, against which she

father limited his stay.

More turtle, more iguana, rinds and luscious cores, were that hasty visit, than were even the luxurious table of Fredville; rejoiced in the prospect of his plantations, and farms, to the practical man, capable of a deeper study, than poor Willy Enmore.

Mary and Martha had their clear-starching of their choice widower described by Lucretia fifty; and Mrs. Warwick had her scholastic rule of her deputy would stand in the way of : between the young heir of Fredville and automata.

the death of — “On the 10th of August, at Palk Crescent, Torquay, aged 73, Everard Hartley Horsford, Esq. of Clevelands, Herts; and at the same place, two days afterwards, in the 27th year of her age, Florence Emily, second daughter of the above, and wife of Arthur Rawdon, Esq., of Heckington Hall!” —

CHAPTER XXI.

BUT yesterday, as far removed as space could part them; and now, as near as if united by the very air she breathed! — On waking from the first sleep into which she had wept herself after reading that fearful announcement, it seemed to poor Tiny, as if her youth's companion, — her womanhood's hateful enemy, — were hovering over her head.

Who has not experienced the strange sensation, that the death of those dearest to us seems to remove them at once to a dark, mysterious, unfathomable distance; — while that of a mere acquaintance, appears, on the contrary, to bring them, life-like, to our presence.

Not a word reached Fredville on the subject which occupied all its thoughts, beyond that formal paragraph. The event having occurred but a day previous to the despatch of the Mails, no letter, however brief, arrived to soften or explain. The simultaneous deaths of father and daughter naturally led to a supposition that they might be the result of some infectious disorder or epidemic.

But alas! one of those terrible presentiments spontaneous in the human mind, which stir the very pulses of our being as by a death-knell, assured poor Tiny that

some dreadful mystery was connected with this double death.

Patiently, however, had she to await the development of her apprehensions. Till the arrival of the following mail, the thronging suggestions of her anxious heart, no less than Lucretia's wild and groundless surmises, must bide their time.

That the decease of a Rawdon of Heckington necessitated a family mourning at Fredville, sufficed to secure her from the inundation of worldly gossip which must have rendered still more puzzling her guesses at truth, was some alleviation. Mrs. Warwick, indeed, entitled by the intermarriage of her brother with the Horsford family to especial sympathy in the event, despatched to Fredville a groom wearing so lugubrious a sacerdotal livery as almost to impersonate a sexton; bearing a letter of condolence, drawn up with such serried precision by Miss Strickney, that its hard angles seemed almost to bruise the intellect of the reader. Whereas Lord and Lady Ormadale contented themselves with riding over to say that "as dear Miss Corbet probably no longer wished to see them to dine and sleep, on the 1st of October, as previously settled, if a change of air and scene could be agreeable to her, there was at all times a quiet suite of rooms and an affectionate welcome awaiting her at the 'Government House.'"

When at length the mail so eagerly anticipated was signalled in the harbour, it brought, only a single letter

for Tiny, and that from her father. Her vague hope that Amy would write — that Arthur would write, — was disappointed.

“I am truly sorry, my dear child,” wrote the simple-minded farmer of Northover, “that you should have been exposed to the sudden shock of learning Florence Rawdon’s decease from the newspapers; but it could not be helped. I am still more sorry to tell you that you must be content with having Alfred only, as your guest, this winter. It is not *possible* for me to bear him company. Judge for yourself.

“Three days after the news of Mrs. Rawdon’s sudden death reached Heckington, I was sent for by Arthur, — who was not at Torquay when she died, and did not so much as attend the funeral. (Such a strange, wayward race, those Enmores!)

“When I entered his study, however, I saw that it was not indifference to his loss, or want of feeling, which had kept him away from the house of death; for never in my born days, my dear girl, did I behold a man so altered! He looked ten years older; — his eyes sunk in his head, — his features drawn together as if by untimely wrinkles. — He did not even pretend to listen while I offered him the condolences usually made on such occasions; but after a minute, made a struggle to inform me that he was going abroad for a year or two, — to Italy, — to the East; — and that *the Highams*, who had kindly undertaken the charge of

his children during his absence, had already fetched them away, to Park Lane, to live with and be as their own. —

“‘This house will, of course, be shut up while I am absent from England, Corbet,’ said he. ‘And what I have to ask of you, as of a near relative and valued friend, is, that you will undertake the care of the property, on the same terms as for the Court of Chancery, with absolute authority over the whole. — If you kindly consent, you will find a Power of Attorney lying for you at Meriton’s, our family solicitor, in Lincoln’s Inn; — who is now drawing out my will, — by which, with your permission, I shall constitute you joint guardian, with Lord Higham, of my children.’

“I did not think twice about any answer, Tiny; for who could have had the heart to say nay to a poor fellow, suffering as Arthur evidently was at that moment? I objected only, that being now, thanks to my daughter, at ease in my circumstances, payment for any services I was able to render him was quite unnecessary.

“Matters were soon settled between us. And, you must perceive, my dear child, that as Arthur has already departed for the Continent, it is impossible for *me* to abandon my post.

“Alfred will be with you early in November: overjoyed at the prospect of his voyage, his visit, and above all at his emancipation from Greek and Latin.”

Deep as was her disappointment she was of opinion, an opinion Lucretia, that it was his duty to remain in England.

All she could do in the unremittingly to the improvement of her little domain. Weary of the influence of several of the finest Plantations contributed to the influence of right earnest the task of the extensive farms attached to Hurtsfield. If Sir Joseph F. the bread-fruit-tree, and Lord Sophia Corbet enriched it with novelties recommended by the by much prodigality of choice medals, enables the agricultural

When, at the close of the rainy season, in December, Alfred and the Pacific mail made their appearance together, Miss Corbet was at first too much struck by the growth and improvement of the handsome stripling, to indulge in much questioning. When she *had* leisure and composure to be curious, she found in her brother's replies, a trifle more of Eton, than of Northover.

"Yes! Arthur Rawdon had started no end of an expedition; — in a yacht he believed, — couldn't exactly say where, — to Shanghai, — or Timbuctoo — or *somewhere*. No chance of his returning for years to come, — if ever."

Lucretia's inquiries were answered with the same frank vagueness. A stranger to the old lady, who had prudently avoided Northover during vacation-time, his good looks and cheery manners made an immediate conquest of the eccentric spinster. He wanted indeed only a broken leg or sprained knee, to make him as great a favourite as Edgar.

The frank lifting of his cordial eyes obtained indulgence for every shortcoming.

"I can't say, to a hair, what Mrs. Rawdon died of, — poor woman!" — said he, when more closely questioned. "Probably the shock of seeing her old father fall dead before her, from a stroke of apoplexy. But I know that her sister and Lord Higham got down to *Torquay* before she expired, in time to receive her last instructions. There was a great talk raised in our neigh-

bourhood, — chiefly by those foolish Hartlands, — about the shamefulness of Arthur's not being with his wife at her death; or at all events, bringing her home to be buried, or attending the funeral."

"And did he *not*?"

"By her own express desire, she was buried with her father, at Torquay. As soon as Arthur left England, and the Freres came down from town at the end of the session, proposals were sent round for a memorial-window in Heckington church to the memory of Mrs. Rawdon. — Dying so young and being so beautiful, people were, of course, very sorry for her."

A sigh, somewhat resembling a grunt, expressed considerable dissent on the part of the plain-dealing spinster.

"Mrs. Hartland, who was at the head of the subscription, put down her name for five pounds; and Lady Frere, as became a Privy Councillor's wife and the proprietress of Cleveland, overtrumped her, by subscribing *ten*. When they applied to my father, in a long flummery letter, he declined, till he had communicated on the subject with Lord Higham."

"Who returned for answer?" —

"That he had acted very judiciously — that the proceeding was quite unauthorised by the family. And so, we heard no more of the memorial window; for by the same post came a letter from Lord Higham to Sir Barton, requesting that the scheme might be abandoned. Cleve-

lands, of course, withdrew its name, and Shrublands followed the example; and like all failures, where the money has been returned at the doors, the less said about it, I believe, the better. So at least thinks my father, — to whom the honour and credit of Heckington are as dear as his own."

"But the children? — Dear Evvy, — my own, pretty little Sophy?" inquired his sister, — who was as busy with her needlework in a shady corner of the room, as the disturbance of her feelings would allow.

"Both getting on famously," replied Alfred, though almost tired of answering questions. "My father insisted, before I sailed, on my seeing Lord and Lady Higham and the whole nursery; though I'd have much rather not, — they were still in such deep mourning."

"You saw them, however?"

"Didn't I! — Poor Lady Higham as thin and pale as a ghost, and tears in her eyes at every word: — Tuddy's baby, — though as able to walk as I am, — always in her arms; though more, I suspect, for the memory of her little dead-and-gone son, than of her sister."

"Did she send me no message, Alfred?" inquired Miss Corbet, in a very faint voice.

"She was beginning to do so, — she got as far as — 'Tell my dearest Tiny,' — but there her sobs stopped her; and she hurried with little Sophy out of the room."

A few moments afterwards, his sister made an equally precipitate retreat. And then commenced a more rigor

ous cross-examination on the part of the sturdy Lucretia. Alfred, however, was not the boy to surrender his news-budget without a struggle.

"To own the truth," said he, "I acquired as little useful knowledge during my short stay in town, as (except in the playing fields), at Eton. A grand political shindy was going on, and a loud talk of the ministry going out; — a great dust, or rather a great fog, — and everything in confusion."

"Dear me! — Bless my soul!" — exclaimed Lucretia, who cared very little about the matter, except as affecting the Highams. — "And what was your father's opinion about it all?"

"That it signifies little at any time who is in or out, unless to the parties themselves. Such changes, he thinks as advantageous to the country as successive crops to land: the measures of the Liberals being usually carried by the Illiberals, — and Tory measures by the Whigs, — just as in our Eton rowing-matches we look one way and pull the other; — which makes the beaten track of politics as broad as it is long."

"Better it were shorter and narrower!" croaked Lucretia. "But since the ministry was shaking in its shoes, I'm afraid there's little to be expected in the way of rational communications from Park Lane."

The courteous reader is now requested to suppose that a year and a day have "dragged their slow length along;" — to suppose it, — because the period of war

pense is as wearisome to describe as to endure, — even though enlivened, as in the case of good old Lucretia Rawdon, — by the hunting of centipedes or bagging of humming-birds; or occupied, as in that of Sophia Corbet, by dwelling sadly on the past, and courageously on passing events.

If Tiny entertained, for the future, certain vague and far-remote hopes, let us trust that they regarded the eventual settlement in life of Tuddy's baby.

A letter received from her brother after he quitted the West Indies, during her own summer sojourn at Hurtsfield and his at Northover previous to instalment at Cambridge, though it contained no news of home, the almost daily record of whose doings — (its sayings were few!) — were regularly transmitted to her by her father, afforded a few interesting particulars which he had gathered at the hospitable board of Lord Higham, in his transit through town.

"Evvy is grown a noble boy, — as sturdy a little beggar as was ever beheld; and the little girl, — baby no longer, — can pronounce the name of 'Tuddy' so as to be perfectly intelligible to Aunt Amy and Nurse Milsum. Perhaps after my first term at Cambridge, I may become a sufficient proficient in the dead languages, to interpret its lingo.

"They seem to hear very little of Arthur. 'Somebody,' (whose name was as much lost upon me as if articulated by Tuddy's baby,) to whom he had given in

the Mediterranean a cast in his yacht, the Osprey, brought home to the children some beautiful Indian toys, which seem to announce that he has been a great wanderer. But the same N. N. also stated that Arthur Rawdon was in all respects so altered, as to be scarcely recognisable. Where he had been, or whither he was going, was a problem to the anonymous deponent." —

This intelligence, vague as it was, enabled Miss Corbet to hear without much surprise or agitation, soon after her return to Fredville for the winter, that a schooner yacht of 200 tons, called the Osprey, was anchored at Port Royal. And when, shortly afterwards, a spare, bronzed stranger, with hair only a little less grey than the grizzly poll of Remus, looked in upon her one morning from the verandah, she neither screamed nor fainted; but with almost decent composure, advanced to welcome her cousin Arthur.

Changed as he was, she could of course no longer see in him one of those terrible Enmores pointed out to her avoidance by her kind stepmother; and treated him accordingly with the love due to a cousin, and the sympathy due to his sadness. Tiny was herself a little altered; graver, older, though not a particle less lovely than of old.

Together, they wandered about the scenery so interesting to both; together, devised plans for future improvements. Lucretia, indeed, who had long decided that *something* was wanting to complete the resemblance be-

tween "Paul and Virginia" and Fredville, was not altogether satisfied with the dry and rational nature of their pursuits; and even Susan Moore was of opinion, when their strollings among the palm-groves and bamboos had been prolonged from weeks to months, that it was *almost* time Master Atty and Miss Sophy came to an understanding.

The hesitation of Arthur Rawdon to offer himself to the acceptance of his cousin, probably arose from a painful consciousness of the humiliating antecedents he had brought upon himself. But whatever might be the nature of their mutual retrospections or anticipations, to the credit of both be it recorded, that not a word ever escaped the lips of Tiny injurious to the memory of the dead. Nor did Arthur, in his most unguarded moments, betray to the woman he loved, that the death of his wife resulted from the birth of a child it was impossible for him to acknowledge; or that, though her worthless mother would fain have concealed the fact, — even in the face of Death, — Judgment, — Eternity, — all had been confessed to him by his poor, misguided Florence, in a letter dictated by heartfelt penitence; remitted to him at the instigation of Lord Higham, by the clergyman who had administered to her death-bed.

The stone was rolled to the mouth of her sepulchre! — To Arthur, the secrets of her untimely grave were *inviolable*.

He did not even acquaint Miss Corbet that retributive

justice had overtaken Mrs. Horsford and her unprincipled son. Living together in London lodgings, in reduced circumstances, their only solace consisted in preying upon each other — like the cock and the serpent, enclosed by the laws of the ancients, in the sack with the paricide.

When spring-time came, and the logwood was again in bloom and the wild plantains once more verdant, even Arthur Rawdon seemed to think he had loitered long enough, infructuously, at Fredville.

One evening, in the fragrant twilight, his tremulous hand, somehow or other, found itself grasping the slender fingers of his cousin.

“The master of the Osprey has been with me to-day, Tiny,” said he, “and I have ordered her to be placed in sailing order. — I find I must hasten back again to England. — Your father writes me word that everything at Heckington is at sixes and sevens, for want of the presence of a master. — He complains, too, that you are sadly wanted at Northover.”

Tiny made no reply. But the hand enclosed in that of her cousin trembled still more unconcealably than his own.

“I want you to give me a great deal of advice previous to my departure,” he continued, in a faltering voice. “It is highly necessary I should learn how to manage those poor dear children. I must have them

back from the Highams. — I feel that I can live no longer without my darling Evvy!”

“You don’t mean, I hope, to exclude Tuddy’s baby from your affections?” rejoined Miss Corbet, endeavouring to speak cheerfully, though in a voice somewhat less assured than became her pseudonym of Placidia. “And why not call them ‘our’ children? — Why not say at once, my own Tiny, come back with me, — come home to Heckington?”

THE END.

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